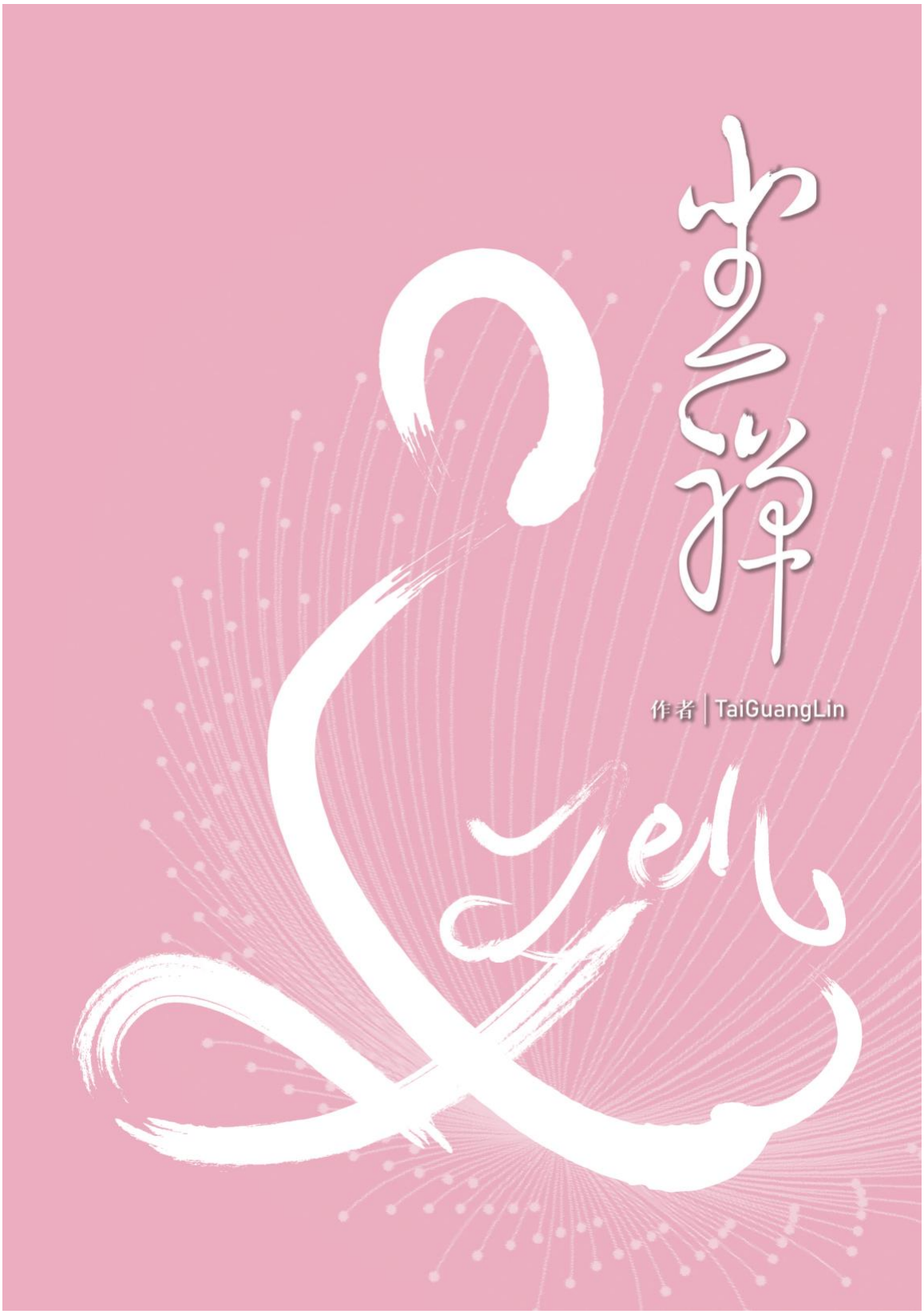
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Zazen

The Next Generation of the Ultimate Buddhist Dharma

Tai Guang Lin

Foreword

On February 25, 2014, the author started a thread on the Baidu Tieba forum to answer questions regarding Buddha-Dharma and practice. By July 25, 2014, he posted his final reply to bid the community a temporary farewell. In just five short months, he won the respect and following of a vast audience. Many began practicing the methods shared in his posts and expressed a sincere desire to become his disciples. His followers eventually established a dedicated community—the "Taiguanglin" group—to facilitate the exchange and promotion of his methods, a group that continues to this day. This somewhat mysterious figure is known to all as Master Tai.

The two books, Zazen and Zazen: A Collection of Questions and Answers, compile all the articles Master Tai published on the forum along with his responses to fellow practitioners. These books include content previously deleted by forum moderators, as the original online threads are now incomplete. This book has meticulously reorganized and edited that material to ensure a coherent progression.

In Zazen, Master Tai uses modern, accessible language to explain the methods and paths of Buddhist practice. Starting from the origins of the universe, he integrates fundamental Buddhist principles to discuss the specific steps of cultivation. He provides a detailed account of the meditation process, offering a complete roadmap from a beginner’s foundation to the Fourth Dhyana. Most precious of all, Master Tai uses his own experiential insights combined with modern medical knowledge to conduct a profound analysis of the relationships between Zen practices, the physical body, and consciousness. His insights into human anatomy and physiological structures reach a depth that modern scientific research has yet to attain.

In Zazen: A Collection of Questions and Answers, Master Tai resolves many practical problems encountered by practitioners and provides further teachings on points that were unclear in the main text. According to the experiences of many fellow practitioners, the importance of these Q&A records is in no way inferior to the core book itself. The materials provided by Master Tai will undoubtedly help those committed to the practice of Zen avoid many detours and save invaluable time on their journey. Consequently, many regard these works as an irreplaceable treasure of practical cultivation. We express our heartfelt gratitude for Master Tai’s compassionate teachings and selfless dedication!

Master Tai once said: "That you are able to study the Buddha-Dharma and pursue truth and liberation here is the result of merit cultivated in past lives; you are individuals who planted immense merit fields before the Buddha, otherwise, you could not have encountered such profound teachings." To this end, we sincerely hope that everyone who reads this book will cherish this rare opportunity and obtain true benefits from Master Tai’s path of practice.

Translator’s Preface

In a world saturated with abstract spiritual theories and vague mindfulness guides, Zazen: The Next Generation of the Ultimate Buddhist Dharma stands as a provocative anomaly. This is not a book of prayers or religious dogmas; it is a technical manual for spiritual engineering.

A Science of the Body and Mind

Master Tai’s approach is fundamentally "bottom-up." He argues that the lofty states of "Emptiness" and "Enlightenment" are unreachable if one ignores the biological vessel—the human body . To the modern reader, his insights may seem staggering: he provides specific physiological benchmarks for meditation, such as a heart rate of 35 beats per minute and a breathing frequency of fewer than five times per minute.

By deconstructing the roles of fascia, the nervous system, and even cellular metabolism (Reactive Oxygen Species or ROS), this work bridges ancient wisdom with a modern biological framework. It offers a complete roadmap from a beginner’s foundation to the profound heights of the Fourth Dhyana.

A Guide for the Skeptical Seeker

For the general English reader, the cultural and terminological differences may at first seem daunting. We suggest treating concepts like Qi or Meridians as technical descriptions for internal bio-electrical states and neural pathways. Master Tai asks not for your blind faith, but for your rigorous experimentation. As you read, you will encounter a style that is raw, direct, and occasionally blunt—the voice of a practitioner speaking from the front lines of human consciousness.

How to Navigate This Book

To help the reader stay engaged, we suggest viewing the book through these core lenses:

- The Theoretical Foundation: Chapter 1 explains the "evolutionary descent" of the universe and consciousness from the Eighth Consciousness down to our sensory reality.
- The Biological Blueprint: Chapters 2 and 6 dive into the mechanics of the body, including abdominal breathing and the clearing of meridian channels.
- The Practical Path: Chapters 3 and 5 provide specific methods—from the ear-faculty method to the contemplation of longing.

• The Limits of Human Potential: Chapter 7 explores the principles behind "supernatural powers," treating them as natural byproducts of biological refinement rather than mystical goals.

This translation aims to preserve the authenticity of Master Tai's original teachings, providing a bridge between ancient Eastern "Shi-Zheng" (Actualized Verification) and the modern quest for human optimization. We invite you to approach this text with an open but skeptical mind, utilizing it as a tool for your own evolution.

Disclaimer

1. Medical and Physiological Information

The contents of this book, including but not limited to discussions on breathing techniques, meridian clearing, heart rate regulation, and physiological phenomena such as "high-energy blood," are based on the author's personal Shi-Zheng (Actualized Verification) and philosophical perspectives. The anatomical and physiological insights presented may not align with or be recognized by contemporary mainstream medical science.

- No Medical Advice: This work is for informational and spiritual purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.
- Consult a Physician: Readers are strongly advised to consult with a qualified healthcare professional before attempting any breathing exercises, intensive meditation postures (such as the Full Lotus Position), or dietary changes described in this book, especially if they have pre-existing cardiovascular or respiratory conditions, or are pregnant.
- Assumption of Risk: The author and translator disclaim any liability for physical injury or adverse health effects resulting from the application or imitation of the methods described herein.

2. Psychological and Mental Health

Advanced meditation practices can involve altered states of consciousness, hallucinations, and significant emotional fluctuations.

- Psychological Risk: For individuals with a history of mental health conditions, deep meditation may trigger underlying symptoms. If you experience severe anxiety, paranoia, or a loss of reality during practice, stop immediately and seek professional psychological assistance.

3. Legal and Results Disclaimer

- No Guarantee of Results: Attainment of meditative stages (such as the Four Dhyanas) or "supernatural powers" depends on an individual's innate capacity, perseverance, and unique circumstances. This book offers no guarantee that any reader will achieve specific results.

• Limitation of Liability: To the fullest extent permitted by law, the author, translator, and publisher shall not be held liable for any direct, indirect, or incidental damages— including but not limited to property loss, personal injury, or legal disputes—arising from the use of the information in this book.

• Independent Perspectives: Statements regarding karma, worldviews, and religious history represent the author’s personal insights and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the translator or the distribution platforms.

4. External Resources and Community

This book may mention external links or third-party communities (such as the "Taiguanglin" group). The author and translator are not responsible for the accuracy, safety, or content of any information provided by these external entities.

Zazen: The Next Generation of the Ultimate Buddhist Dharma

Foreword *3*

Translator's Preface *4*

A Science of the Body and Mind **4**

A Guide for the Skeptical Seeker **4**

How to Navigate This Book **4**

Disclaimer *6*

1. Medical and Physiological Information **6**

2. Psychological and Mental Health **6**

3. Legal and Results Disclaimer **6**

4. External Resources and Community **7**

Chapter 1: General Theory *11*

Section 01: The Ultimate Buddha Dharma **11**

Section 02: The Eighteen Heavens of the Realm of Form **14**

Section 03: The Six Heavens of the Desire Realm——The Heavens of the Four Deva Kings, Trayastrimsa Heaven **23**

Section 04: Emotional Longing and Emotion of Doubting **24**

Section 05: Yang Spirit **27**

Section 06: The Diamond Sutra **28**

Section 07: The Five Vehicles of Buddhism **32**

Section 08: The Five Wisdoms **33**

Section 09: The Fate of Ordinary People **36**

Chapter 2: From the Beginning to Desire Realm Meditation *40*

Section 01: Karmic Obstacles **40**

Section 02: Refrain from Strife, Killing, and Eating Meat **41**

Section 03: Eliminating Eighty Percent of Sexual Desire—"Without eradicating sexual desire, one cannot escape Samsara" **44**

Section 04: Opening up the Ren and Du Meridians—Three Qi return to the Origin 46

Chapter 3: From Dhyana in the Desire Realm to the Fourth Dhyana 52

Section 01: Sitting in Forgetfulness 53

Section 02: Methods of Practice 56

1. The Targets to Eliminate During Meditation 56
2. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's Method of Enlightenment through the Ear-Faculty 58
3. The Tiantai school's Samatha and Vipassana 60
4. The Zen Practice of Huatou (Contemplate Great Questioning) 63
5. Buddha Recitation Samadhi (Contemplate Longing) 64
6. The Evolution of Practice Methods 68

Section 03: From Dhyana in the Desire Realm to the First Dhyana 70

Section 04: From the First Dhyana to the Fourth Dhyana 73

Section 05: Hallucinations in Dhyana 74

Section 06: The Stages of Dhyana 80

1. The Stages of Dhyana and Essence, Qi, Spirit 80
2. The Stages of Dhyana and Bodily Characteristics 82
3. The Stages of Dhyana and the Stages of Relaxation 83

Chapter 4: From the Fourth Dhyana to Arhats 88

Chapter 5: Guiding Junior Disciples in Practice 91

Section 01: Summary of Preliminary, Middle, and Advanced Stages of Practice 91

Section 02: 100-meter Sprint vs. Marathon 92

Section 03: The Career Paths of Monks 94

Section 04: Breathing and Supernatural Powers 96

Section 05: Breathing and High-Energy Blood 98

Section 06: The Correct Breathing Method 101

Section 07: Oxygen Uptake 105

Section 08: Physical Phenomena That Arise During Breathing and Sitting Meditation 106

Section 09: Prajna Paramita 110

Section 10: The monk with nasal congestion and the Horse-Face Elder Monk 113

Chapter 6: The Human Body 120

Section 01: Breathing 120

1. Breathing and Delusion 120

2. Breathing and Cellular Upgrades 123
3. Breathing and Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) 126
4. Breathing and Recitation of Buddha's Name, Mantras 127

Section 02: The Brain 131

Section 03: Blood Pressure 136

Section 04: Blood Circulation 138

Section 05: Nerves and Fascia 140
1. Nervous System 141
2. Fascia 145
3. Nerves in the Dantian 148

Section 06: Dantian 149

Chapter 7: Supernatural Powers 155

Section 01: The Power of Knowing Past and Future Lives 155

Section 02: Supernormal Feet 157

Section 03: Divine Ear 158

Section 04: Divine eye, Mind-reading 159

Section 05: Tantric Buddhism and Supernatural Powers 161

Chapter 8: Karmic Force 165

Section 01: The Arising of Karmic Force 165

Section 02: Ordinary Beings' Resolving Karmic Obstacles 165

Section 03: Arhats' Resolving Karmic Obstacles 166

Section 04: Bodhisattvas' Resolve Karmic Obstacles 167

Section 05: The Professions of Bodhisattvas 169

Section 06: The Partner System of Bodhisattvas 171

Chapter 1: General Theory

Section 01: The Ultimate Buddha Dharma

I hereby unveil the ultimate Buddhism Dharma. If you are able to comprehend, congratulations! You would save yourself numerous eons of dharma practice.

Others may explain Dharma using a top-down approach starting from the leaves of a tree, then moving to branches, the trunk, and finally the roots, which is “emptiness”. There are many “leaves” in Buddha Dharma, for example, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Twelve-linked chain of causation, the Thirty-seven Aids to Enlightenment, and so on. However, when first encountering Buddha Dharma, the concepts within its various teachings can easily confuse people.

Here I present dharma using the bottom-up approach, starting from the roots and moving upward. Those ultimate questions about the universe, time, space, and our existence are all answered within this explanation!

Delusion, Discrimination, Attachment

Our Intrinsic Nature always exists, permanent and constant. It is called the Eighth Consciousness—Alaya Consciousness. When there is nothing within this Eighth Consciousness, the being is termed Buddha. This is merely a name; name and forms are inherently empty and not the key point here.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, within this Eighth Consciousness, a delusion arises. To understand this first delusion, we need to clarify two points.

First, why does this happen? There is NO cause! The Sūrangama Sūtra says it just arises all of a sudden.

Second, is this delusion countable? This is crucial for Gradual Enlightenment and Immediate Enlightenment. The answer is: This delusion is countable.

In sutras, anything countable but immeasurable in quantity is called “innumerable”. Those that are uncountable are called “endless”, which refers to a state of existence. In scriptures, only void is described as “endless”, which is called the Endless Void. Other things are referred to as “innumerable” and are countable!

When the first delusion arises in the Eighth Consciousness, one is called a Bodhisattva. When this delusion disappears, one is called a Buddha. Delusion keeps increasing from one to two, two to three, and so on! Bodhisattvas have eleven types of delusions.

After developing these eleven types of delusions, a cognition emerges: this delusion is different from other delusions, here we have got Discriminating Mind or the Seventh Consciousness, known as Manas Consciousness. Having this discriminating mind, one becomes an Arhat. As delusions multiply, one’s

discriminating mind intensifies. An Arhat has nine types of discriminating minds, of which I will discuss a few (detailed in Section 5 of this chapter).

Among the nine types of discriminating minds, one is called Sequential Discrimination, which refers to the belief that one delusion arises first, followed by another. Consequently, the concept of time is born. Another type of discriminating mind is called Self-other Discrimination, where one believes that this delusion is mine, while that delusion is not mine—thus giving rise to the perception of others. In addition, another type of discriminating mind is called Sentiment-being Discrimination, where one divides the delusions that are not mine into many different ones, each distinct from the other. From this kind of discriminating mind, innumerable sentient beings come into existence. The remaining six types are too complex to understand and will not be mentioned.

Another cognition arises after all the nine types of discriminating minds are developed, known as the Attachment Mind, or the Sixth Consciousness. An arhat would degenerate into an ordinary being and enter samsara once he develops the attachment mind.

To summarize, when the Eighth Consciousness contains nothing, the one is termed Buddha. When the Eighth Consciousness contains delusions, the one becomes Bodhisattva. Bodhisattva that has developed a discriminating mind becomes an Arhat, and an arhat that has developed an attachment mind becomes an ordinary being.

The Three Realms and Twenty-Eight Heavens—the Four Heavens of the Formless Realm

Now, let's discuss the attachments of ordinary beings.

The first attachment is to the delusion itself. This attachment, with no specific contents, is merely the act of generating delusions. One delusion arises from another, and these delusions are divided by discriminating mind into many segments, giving rise to the cyclic rebirth.

The attachment to the delusion itself can be understood as follows. The delusion we generate always has content. The content is the delusion itself; the delusion is also the content. However, the attachment to the delusion itself has no content.

For instance, my 86-year-old grandmother would fall asleep in front of the TV when it was turned on. Once the TV was turned off, she would wake up and turn it on, and then fall asleep again. In the last three years of her life, she could no longer distinguish between channels. It didn't matter what the TV was showing, as long as it's on. Grandma watched TV while sleeping; when the TV was turned off, she was woken up and said she still wanted to watch, then turned it back on. For my grandmother, this represented her attachment to the TV itself, not its programs.

The attachment to delusion itself corresponds to the highest heaven within the Twenty-Eight Heavens, the Heaven of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception. Neither perception nor non-perception, as the name suggests, is neither thinking nor not thinking. There is nothing in the delusion, hence it is called *non-perception*, yet the delusion persists, hence it is also called *nor non-perception*.

Within this contentless attachment, the first content, “nothingness”, emerges, leading to the Heaven of Nothingness!

Subsequently, the attachment to self arises, believing consciousness is boundless, leading to the Heaven of Infinite Consciousness!

Then comes the recognition of external entities. The first recognized object is space: Where am I? I'm in this space, this space is boundless, my consciousness is also boundless, my boundless consciousness covers the boundless space. Thus, the Heaven of Boundless Space comes into existence!

Up to this point, we have introduced all the Four Heavens of the Formless Realm! The term “Non-material” indicates absence of material objects in space.

The Three Realms and Twenty-Eight Heavens—the Eighteen Heavens of the Form Realm

Next, material objects emerge in space—beginning with names and then tangible objects that can be recognized by sensory organs.

The first sensory organ formed is the eye. The eyeball alone cannot float on its own in space, nor can it directly touch an object, leading to the necessity of a body to protect the eyes as well as touching objects. The vibration of objects produces sound, and the need to perceive sound led to the formation of the ears. One perceives objects by eyes, body, and ears, further differentiation is required based on odor. The nose is created. Moreover, you want to have the object inside your body so that it is actually yours, so you have got a mouth. Once the object is inside your mouth, you want to taste it, thus the tongue is created.

Up to this point, the Eighteen Heavens in the Form Realm are in shape. The word “Form” indicates the existence of matter and physical body. In these heavens, beings are attached to objects, lifeless objects.

The Three Realms and Twenty-Eight Heavens—the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm

In the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm, beings are attached to other beings, this type of attachment has a beautiful name, Love. Love first exists in the Eighteen Heavens of the Form Realm, but only at the level of thought and watching.

One begins to miss other sentient beings and wishes to interact with them, feeling lonely otherwise. Mere imagination is insufficient and visual contact becomes desirable, followed by physical contact to express love. Next comes a milestone, we want more than feeling another being next to us, we want to express love by physically becoming one, having each other inside us. As a result, some sentient beings develop organs to enter the bodies of other sentient beings, while some other sentient beings develop organs to be entered. They are called man and woman, respectively.

With men and women, the Six Heavens of Desire Realm come into existence.

As love between men and women intensifies, a new attachment, the Sexual Desire, arises. The Six Heavens of Desire Realm are characterized by the intensity of sexual desire, the stronger the sexual desire, the lower the heaven.

Men pursue women, women for men. At times when a loved one doesn’t care about you, you might hate. Hatred can develop from love, and ultimate hatred can lead to killing. I love you, but you don't love me. How infuriating! I'll kill you first. If killing you doesn't satisfy me, I'll eat your flesh and drink your blood—this way, we'll be together. “I love you, so I eat you”, a quote from scripture.

These killers formed the human world. They kill and eat each other, no longer remember the origination of hatred and killing, the LOVE. They start to be obsessed with taste. The behavior of eating would become a habit as long as you eat frequently. Killers turn into animals to easily get revenged by those they kill. Human beings kill animals that are totally helpless. As time goes on, the cycle of predation continues among animals as well. The deduction of the Hungry Ghost World and the Hell World is omitted here.

Thus, the unveiling draws to an end. I have disclosed the creation of time, space and the start of beings in the universe, as well as the generation of karmic forces. This is ultimate Buddhism from which all Dharma teachings can be explained from here.

Section 02: The Eighteen Heavens of the Realm of Form

The Buddha connected the names of the meditation stages with the names of the heavens, indicating that these stages of meditation are the thresholds to enter various heavens. To jump out of the cycle of birth and death and become an Arhat, one must surpass all the Twenty-Eight Heavens.

In his early years, while following non-buddhist practices, the Buddha had reached the Heaven of neither perception nor non-perception, but had not yet settled the cycle of birth and death. He also witnessed that non-buddhist teachers, after reaching the Heaven of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception, fell and reborn into the animal realm once their accumulated merits were exhausted. Hence, he was determined to find the true path to Nirvana.

When searching online or asking other practitioners, people often get descriptions of the four dhyanas based on the experiences of ordinary people. This is akin to a high school student preparing for college entrance exams. Each university has its own score requirements and special demands, but the student completely disregards these requirements and studies solely based on personal feelings. Claiming to have reached deeper meditation simply because today's sitting meditation is more comfortable than yesterday's is an extremely naive notion!

According to the Shurangama Sutra, the Six heavens of the Desire Realm are classified based on the degree of sensual desire. The Heaven of the Four Deva Kings has the lowest requirement: one must observe the Five Precepts but not necessarily renounce marital love. The highest, the Heaven of Comfort Gained Through Others' Transformations, requires the absence of pleasure during sexual activity, akin to chewing wax with the mind wandering elsewhere—not focusing on the action itself. When you completely eradicate sensual desire and have no concept of it, you can enter the Heavens of First Dhyana.

The following teachings can only be spoken by a "returned one"!

The number of people worldwide who have attained the Fourth Dhyana can be counted in three digits! Yet, ordinary people who reach the Fourth Dhyana cannot deeply understand the evolutionary process of the universe. Only "returned ones" who have experience of Nirvana can use the wisdom of Nirvana to see the universe and life, explaining everything perfectly and without hindrance.

Everyone who hears the ultimate theory of liberation from suffering must have planted immeasurable meritorious seeds before the Buddha in past lives. Some may have given me alms and offerings during my hard practice. Therefore, you can hear these wonderful teachings in this life without paying any price! I hope everyone cherishes such predestined Dharma ties.

1. The Nine Heavens of the Fourth Dhyana

Let's start with the Heaven of Infinite Space.

As mentioned earlier, my boundless consciousness covering the infinite void, which is called the Heaven of Infinite Space. A person's consciousness can perceive the entire emptiness of space without any obstacles.

From here, the concept of self-attachment begins to appear, which is the emotion without content. Consciousness starts to contract and this consciousness could be called Yang spirit or Primordial spirit. Let's stick to Yang spirit to avoid confusion.

Under the effect of self-attachment, Yang spirit begins to contract bit by bit. However, the extended perception of Yang spirit can still recognize the entire emptiness of space. This contraction process of Yang spirit corresponds to the upper five heavens of the Nine Heavens of the Fourth Dhyana, also known as the Five pure-dwelling Heavens: the Heaven of No Agitation, the Heaven of No Heat, the Heaven of Excellent Perception, the Heaven of Excellent Presentation, and the Ultimate Form Heaven.

A person's self-attachment gradually develops into the emotional state of joy! This joy is not the excitement or accelerated heartbeat we could feel. It is relative to the emotion of suffering. Because there is no suffering, it is called *joy* or *emotion of joy*. More precisely, it is the satisfaction of self-existence, the feeling of being a living being, a life, an existence in this world—that is the feeling!

When a person develops the emotion of joy, Yang spirit contracts further, somewhere beyond its outer boundary becomes unrecognizable, where the extended perception of Yang spirits cannot reach. This unrecognizable place is called *darkness*. With the appearance of darkness, Yang spirit contracts further, and the joy emotion becomes increasingly intense. This process corresponds to the lower four heavens of the Nine Heavens of the Fourth Dhyanas: the Birth of Blessings Heaven, the Love of Blessings Heaven, the Abundant Fruit Heaven, and the No Thought Heaven.

This makes it clear! In the previous Five pure-dwelling Heavens, Yang spirit is a luminous body, originally covering the entire emptiness of space. Later, Yang spirit contracts, but the emitted light can still illuminate the entire space. When entering the lower the Four heavens of the Nine Heavens of Fourth Dhyana, Yang spirit contracts, its light weakens, and unilluminated areas, dark voids, begin to appear. When Yang spirit covers the entire the emptiness of space, its density is infinitely close to zero. As it contracts, the density gradually increases.

In fact, Yang spirit is also composed of substance! Therefore, the duality of brightness and darkness is not truly a duality. Naming it brightness and darkness, darkness is non-darkness. To transcend darkness and non-darkness is to enter the realm of emptiness.

Does this writing style seem familiar? It is the narrative style of the Diamond Sutra! If you truly become enlightened, you can write a hundred Diamond Sutras in a day. Without enlightenment, you can only recite the scriptures repeatedly.

The development process of the Nine Heavens of the Fourth Dhyana is quite simple. When it comes to the following Heavens of the Third Dhyana, it becomes somewhat complex. Those with a clear and logical mind should fully understand what I am saying.

The Three Heavens of the Third Dhyana

You are originally immersed in the satisfaction of your own existence, completely unaware of the outside. But suddenly, you realize that you are surrounded by darkness. Everyone should imagine this together! At this time, you are a luminous sphere—Yang Spirit, suspended in the void, with darkness all around. You then experience the first form of suffering emotion associated with darkness. What kind of emotion is this? Is it fear? No! Fear appears only when suffering becomes very severe. The first suffering emotion is doubt! You will become curious, wondering what is in the darkness. Of course, this doubt is not Verbal Thought, but a subtle emotion of curiosity.

When doubt arises, the material within Yang Spirit begins to condense inwardly. A point of higher density appears in the center of Yang Spirit and produces gravity. The whole Yang Spirit starts to rotate around itself, much like the earth's rotation. This corresponds to the third Heaven of the Third Dhyana—the Heaven of Universal Purity.

Now everyone understands why it is said that humans are miniature universes. The principle of Yang Spirit’s rotation is the same as the universe's rotation. The universe is developed from the rotation of Yang Spirit. It also clarifies why contemplating doubt emotion can break through all forms of suffering emotion since doubt is the first suffering emotion to appear.

In addition, there is longing emotion, which is of the same level as doubt emotion. We'll discuss this emotion separately. Here, we'll use the development of doubt emotion as the narrative thread!

As a person's doubt emotion intensifies, it evolves into an uneasy emotion.

For example, when someone comes to knock on your door, the first emotion you experience is doubt. You might wonder who is outside. You open the door and find no one there, thinking it might be a neighbor's child playing pranks. You return to your task, but the knocking continues. Each time you check, you still find no one there. These repeated experiences turn your doubt into an uneasy emotion.

Some people may develop fear emotion directly, which arises from the worry of bodily harm or loss of possessions. Therefore, fear emerges much later.

The uneasy emotion comes after doubt emotion. This uneasy emotion further develops into agitation. Yang Spirit contracts further, and the central gravity force pulling itself inwards intensifies. This corresponds to the second and first Heavens of the Third Dhyana—Heaven of Boundless Purity and Heaven of Lesser Purity.

The Three Heavens in the Second Dhyana.

Next, things become more interesting!

You start to feel irritated by the surrounding darkness! Not knowing what's hiding in the darkness, anxiety mounts, you decide to go on an expedition.

Let's all imagine, you are a radiant globe, suspended in the void, surrounded by darkness. To explore the darkness, wouldn't you first choose a direction? This act of choosing is attention! This attention is the realm of eye faculty. Isn't it quite sudden that eyes come into existence?

At this point, humans do not possess a physical body. The eye-root is attention! To explain attention in another way, it is the act of choosing and abandoning. You choose the external darkness and abandon the internal light. Hence, your eyes can only see the outside and not the inside of your body. You choose one direction in the darkness and abandon other directions, so your eyes can only focus on a single direction with a focal point in your vision.

After choosing a direction, you move toward it. As a luminous sphere without a physical body, your movement speed is the speed of light.

At this point, we need to carefully consider this movement. In the pitch-black darkness without any external reference points, how do you determine if you are moving?

If you say you are moving, then the dark void outside moves with you; if you say you are not moving, then this motion is your illusion. So, the duality of movement and non-movement is not truly a duality. Naming it movement and non-movement, movement is non-movement. To transcend movement and non-movement is to enter the realm of emptiness.

In quantum physics, there is a theory stating that when a particle in the universe moves, another particle countless light-years away moves simultaneously, with no time interval in between. Hence, scientists infer that the universe should function as a whole.

When you fly through the dark void, the entire void moves with you. If you say you haven't moved, then the void hasn't moved either—movement is merely an illusion. The void and Yang Spirit are illusions formed in delusion, and they form and change together. The entire universe is one entity, including the people within it. (Sorry, I don't understand quantum physics, which is just a theory I've heard. Please don't discuss science with me.)

When you fly through the darkness at the speed of light to explore but find nothing, you start wishing for an external light source to illuminate the darkness, allowing you to see what is in it. Then, an external light source appears. This light source, like Yang Spirit, is a luminous sphere. Let's call it a gaseous sphere! The external light source is also a gaseous sphere. This corresponds to the third Heaven of the Second Dhyana—the Heaven of Light Sound. According to sutras, beings in the Heaven of Light Sound fly freely and emit light themselves.

Let's insert a side topic here—the relationship between speed and time!

Scientists have indeed proven through experiments that the faster the speed, the slower the time for the object, inferring that when speed approaches the speed of light, time nearly stops. Why does this

phenomenon occur? Don't forget that both movement and time are formed by delusions, and they are all illusions.

If you set aside human delusions and focus solely on studying speed and time separately, it's hard to understand the real cause, leading to the absurd conclusion that when you exceed the speed of light time will go backwards.

When we include delusions, the issue becomes simple! When a person initially moves, it is at the speed of light, and this movement is completed in a moment of thought. As soon as you direct your thoughts to move in a certain direction, you move at the speed of light. Thus, this speed of light is the speed of a single thought. A single thought is the speed of light, and the speed of light is a single thought. Therefore, the fewer the delusions, the faster the speed; the more the delusions, the slower the speed.

Now, let’s look at time. Time appears in the discriminating mind of an Arhat, which is the discrimination of the chronological order about delusions. The related contents will be detailed in section 05 of this chapter. Let's just talk about time here!

We cannot capture time, so we use the process of development and change in objects to represent time. For example, the earth orbiting the sun once is considered a year, and we'll call this development process aging. So, what is the relationship between aging and delusions? It’s simple! When you feel happy, time flies; when you feel suffering, time drags.

What is the difference between happiness and suffering? It is the difference between fewer and more delusions! When you are happy, you focus on what makes you happy, your attention is highly concentrated, and you don't think of other things. Watching an exciting movie, two hours pass quickly; for a mahjong enthusiast, an all-night session seems to fly by, even holding their bladder. Conversely, when you are in pain, such as enduring leg pain in meditation, every minute and second is pure torture, and the myriad of delusions in your mind makes time drag very slowly.

When you've happily spent ten hours, feeling like it passed as quickly as one hour, your body has only aged one hour, while others aged ten hours. Therefore, those with a good mindset and fewer delusions age slower and live longer; those with a poor mindset and more delusions age faster and have shorter lives. The conclusion is: fewer delusions lead to slower aging; more delusions lead to faster aging.

Connecting this with speed: fewer delusions result in faster speed and slower aging; more delusions result in slower speed and faster aging. Removing the delusions mentioned earlier, it becomes: the faster the speed, the slower the aging; the slower the speed, the faster the aging.

The speed of aging is relative! To those who age slowly, those who age quickly appear to go through time much faster.

Hence, in science fiction, when characters travel at the speed of light and return, they find everything changed—centuries have passed on Earth. One of Master Hsu Yun's disciples was taken to the Pure Land by Avalokiteshvara during his cave meditation. After a round-trip and brief visit, six and a half years had passed on Earth, and he even wrote a travelog of the Pure Land.

Let’s return to the topic of speed: is there anything faster than the speed of light in this world?

It’s impossible! The speed of light is the speed of a single thought. Faster than a thought would be no-thought—no thought means no movement. Without anything faster than the speed of light, turning the clock back is impossible. The perception of time is the same! First, there is the flow of delusions, then the discriminating mind divides it into future and past. The direction of delusion flow is the future. Likewise, after having a face, a human can distinguish front and back based on the face's direction. Wherever your face points is the front; if you turn around, the back becomes the front. Delusions are the same! The emergence of new delusions is the future. You cannot redo past delusions; re-doing them is still a new delusion—the future. You cannot return to the past by re-watching a past movie. Thus, time can never flow backward!

Looking at it this way, the relationship between speed and time is simple. Of course, believing it or not is up to the readers.

You might ask, while meditating, your legs hurting and time dragging, are you aging faster during this period? Yes, you are aging faster. However, once you've opened all your meridians and entered the state of dhyana, you will have fewer delusions. Your aging process will slow down significantly compared to others—you’ll live a healthier extra ten to twenty years. So, you still gain immensely.

Let's return to the main topic!

You are a luminous sphere flying at the speed of light. There is now an external light source, a gaseous sphere light source. However, no matter how you fly, you cannot fully explore the dark void. There is darkness ahead, and your attention is highly concentrated in one direction, leading to a new point of gravitational pull at the surface of Yang Spirit where attention is concentrated. There is a gravitational point formed by emotion in the center of Yang Spirit and now another point of gravitational pull formed by attention on the surface.

Under the influence of these two points of gravitational pull, the original rotational movement of Yang Spirit starts changing. Connecting these points into a line and expanding the line into a plane, the material of Yang Spirit forms a wheel-like vortex in the vertical plane of the sphere. This rotational movement causes the entire sphere to rotate, like a flat wheel rolling forward. The difference is that in the middle vertical section, there is a wheel-like vortex, whereas the material in the semicircles on the sides moves more slowly. In this movement, the sphere begins to elongate, turning into an elliptical shape.

In the universe, there are celestial bodies composed of two stars of similar mass orbiting each other. I think it's called Sirius. I may have forgotten, but it's that kind of phenomenon.

The elliptical Yang Spirit corresponds to the human body! The gravitational point formed by emotion is at the sternum acupoint, and the gravitational point formed by attention is at the head—the head is the product of highly concentrated attention. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and mental consciousness related to verbal thought are all concentrated in the head, five out of the six senses.

The wheel-like vortex in the middle forms an elliptical shape, becoming the central channel of the human body—this way, everyone understands the importance of unblocking the central channel!

If you don't unblock the central channel, where can you progress in your practice? To return to the stage of Yang Spirit, you must unblock the central channel! Otherwise, it's nothing—your Yang Spirit is just a fragmented rotten egg!

Yang Spirit begins to engage in wheel-like vortex rotation, significantly increasing the friction among internal substances. Originally, when rotating as a whole, the friction was minimal. Now it's different, and humans gain the ability to sense this intense friction, which is the second sensory ability—called the sensation of cold and warmth.

When your attention is highly concentrated in one direction, frantically flying at the speed of light, the internal substance movement in Yang Spirit accelerates, increasing the friction. This sensation is called warmth—heat.

When you release your attention and stop flying, the gravitational point formed by attention on the surface weakens, and the wheel-like vortex slows down. This sensation is called cold.

Therefore, the duality of cold and warmth is not truly a duality. Naming it cold and warmth, heat is non-heat. To transcend heat and non-heat is to enter the realm of emptiness.

You also rely on the sensation of cold and warmth to judge whether you are moving or not: when the body feels warm, you think you are moving; when the body doesn’t feel warm, you think you are not moving. High-speed movement generates heat, so high-speed objects should be hot. The fastest-moving entity in the universe is light. Thus, light also carries significant heat. The Heaven with the sensation of cold and warmth corresponds to the second Heaven of the Second Dhyana—Boundless Light Heaven.

Modern people know that light can be divided into parts with and without thermal energy. When sunlight enters the atmosphere, most of the thermal energy is reflected and absorbed by the atmosphere. Therefore, it doesn’t harm the human body. However, direct exposure to sunlight in space would burn a person. Initially, light appears without thermal energy. As beings develop the sensation of cold and warmth, light also carries thermal energy.

Next, Yang Spirit contracts further, and the external luminous source emits light and thermal energy in all directions. These light and thermal energy are also substances—gases.

The gases here are not the same as the gases on Earth; the liquids and solids mentioned later are not the same either—they are celestial substances. For the sake of explanation, we simply use these terms.

The universe begins to be filled with gases, and Yang Spirit also condenses into a gaseous state. From the Heaven of Light Sound downwards, Yang Spirit is gaseous. During flight, external gaseous substances enter Yang Spirit and are expelled from behind. One could also say the substances in Yang Spirit exchange with the external gases. This exchange results in what we humans know as breathing. Continual movement involves constant gas exchange, making people believe this gas exchange is essential; without it, one would die. Therefore, we cannot stop breathing now, or we will die!

During movement, not only does gas exchange occur, but Yang Spirit in its gaseous state collides with external gases. Yang Spirit has a higher density than external gases. Collisions between substances of different densities produce vibrations, giving humans the third sensory ability—hearing.

The hearing not only senses vibrations from collisions between gaseous Yang Spirit and external gases but also detects vibrations from collisions between different external objects. Vibrations from these external collisions cause the pervasive gases to vibrate, transmitting these vibrations to Yang Spirit's gaseous state. Therefore, hearing is more complete than vision! Vision can only perceive one direction, while hearing captures sounds through gas vibrations. As long as there is gas as a medium, vibrations from any direction can be sensed. The Heaven with breathing and hearing corresponds to the first Heaven of the Second Dhyana—Heaven of Lesser Light.

You might ask: breathing appears in the first Heaven of the Second Dhyana, why does it stop at the Fourth Dhyana during practice?

This involves the issue of karma and maintaining the physical body. The human body cannot survive without breathing! You need to use Yang Spirit to activate the body's cells, upgrading all the cells in the body, which is called Qi transforming of the body. At this stage, the body breathes through the skin directly. Note: it's not stopping breathing; it's breathing through the skin. Truly stopping breathing would mean immediate death for a person! Those beyond the Fourth Dhyana can immerse in water without dying; their skin can absorb oxygen from both the air and water.

The Three Heavens of the First Dhyana

Next, Yang Spirit in its gaseous state contracts further, starting to become liquid.

The external luminous gaseous source, after emitting light and thermal energy, gradually cools and becomes liquid; various liquid substances begin to fill the void. Liquid Yang Spirit collides with external liquid substances, leading humans to develop the fourth sensory ability—sense of touch. The second sensory ability—sensation of cold and warmth—also becomes integrated into liquid Yang Spirit.

If you do not practice or reach this realm, you will never know that the body-root can be divided into the sense of touch and the sensation of cold and warmth, and these sensations appearing in different orders! The celestial realm where sentient beings exist with a liquid body and sense of touch corresponds to the third Heaven of the First Dhyana—the Heaven of Great Brahma.

Next, the external liquid stars cool and contract further, forming solid shells around their liquid layers, much like the Earth having a liquid core with solid crust. Although humans now have liquid bodies, they can still fly, but no longer at the speed of light. When nearing external liquid or solid objects, they engage in gas exchange with the surrounding gases of these objects. These objects start solidifying from gaseous states, and the surrounding gases contain elements similar to these substances. Then, humans develop the fifth sensory ability—sense of smell. The celestial realm here corresponds to the second Heaven of the First Dhyana—the Heaven of Brahma's Ministers.

Next, the void is filled with various gases, liquids, and solids. You become attached to a specific smell, liking it. Hence, you place the object emitting this smell into your body—this action is called *eating*. Eating leads to the development of the sixth sensory ability—sense of taste. The celestial realm here corresponds to the first Heaven of the First Dhyana—the Heaven of Brahma's Assembly.

The discussion of the Six Desire Heavens is omitted here!

Let's look at the sutras! The Buddha spoke according to the understanding level of the people at that time. The theory of the four great elements existed long before the Buddha's time. Indian Brahmanism and Yoga schools believed the world was composed of earth, water, fire, wind, plus void. Then, the Buddha directly utilized this theory.

You can also use this theory for reference! People start moving in the Heaven of Light Sound, flying at the speed of light, which corresponds to the wind element. In the Heaven of Limitless Light, the wheel-like vortex of Yang Spirit's material, formed by attention and emotion, leads to the sensation of cold and warmth, which corresponds to fire element. In the three Heavens of the First Dhyana, liquids and solids appear, which correspond to water and earth elements.

Sutras say that there is a great ocean in the world, beyond which there are strong winds; the wind stirs the ocean's waves, blowing the foam into the void, where it solidifies into layers of heavenly palaces—Mount Sumeru floats on the Fragrant Ocean. It's not that there was a solid mountain first, then water encircled it. In any case, the water element came first, then the earth element.

The scriptures state that humans transformed from the devas of the Heaven of Light Sound. These devas flew down to earth, drank sweet springs, then ate the earth's essence, and thus lost the ability to fly, becoming human beings.

For our practice, this transformation is not important. What matters most are the six sensory abilities of humans, all of which start from attention. Therefore, to eliminate the realms of the five faculties, we must eliminate attention! Once attention disappears, the five faculties will naturally fall away.

Let's carefully examine these six sensory abilities! There is a difference between the upper three faculties corresponding to the three Heavens of the Second Dhyana and the lower three faculties corresponding to the three Heavens of the First Dhyana. If you are attentive enough, you will notice that the difference is significant!

The tongue-root, nose-root, and body-root (touch) must contact the external environment to function. The tongue must touch food for taste; the nose must inhale gas for smell; and the body must touch objects for sensation. Therefore, if you concentrate on these three roots in practice, your attention will oscillate with contact and non-contact, making it difficult to maintain high concentration! The similar circumstances apply to observing breath or the Dantian and we will later discuss the phenomena that arise from observing the Dantian.

Now look at the upper three roots: the ear-root, the body-root (cold and warmth sensation), and the eye-root. These three roots we constantly use! The ears always hear sounds when there are sounds, or silence when there aren't; the body (cold and warmth sensation) always feels internal and external temperatures, with no distinction between contact and non-contact; the eyes too—open eyes see the world, closed eyes see darkness, and even a blind person sees darkness. Practicing with these three roots allows for highly concentrated attention—vastly different from practicing with the lower three roots! In the Shurangama Sutra, the Fire-Head Vajra's method of observing the warmth within the body involves working on the cold and warmth sensation—starting with observing sexual desire and internal heat flow.

This way, everyone will know that claims about entering the Fourth Dhyana through breath observation are utter nonsense! People who say this have not even reached the First Dhyana, and their meditation sessions have not exceeded four hours, which is the limit for the First Dhyana! Although it may vary depending on each person's situation, around this time, emotions should generally arise. If you observe your breath for four hours, you'll notice that your breath is constantly changing among inhalation, exhalation, and pauses. Your attention will also oscillate back and forth. Over time, you'll start to feel irritated! Finally, the unsettling oscillation causes you to exit meditation!

In summary, any meditation practice involving observing parts of your body can only lead to the First Dhyana and it cannot bring you into the Second Dhyana! To enter the Second Dhyana, you must work with the upper three faculties! An even better approach is to work directly with emotions—contemplating doubt or longing, bypassing the six sensory abilities, and guiding your meditation directly towards the Fourth Dhyana!

Section 03: The Six Heavens of the Desire Realm——The Heavens of the Four Deva Kings, Trayastrimsa Heaven

Let's talk about the Heavens of the Desire Realms, which might not be found in the sutras. I'm just saying it, and you all just listen, don't ask how I know. I'll just briefly talk about the Heavens of the Four Deva Kings and the Trayastrimsa Heaven.

In the middle of the Saha World, there is Mount Sumeru, with Indra residing at the top. The heaven governed by Indra is called the Trayastrimsa Heaven. At the center of Trayastrimsa Heaven, there is Indra's celestial palace, surrounded by thirty-two regions, each ruled by a heavenly king, together making up the thirty-three heavens.

Look at our Milky Way galaxy, the entire one is Mount Sumeru, and the black hole in the center of the galaxy represents the mountaintop of Mount Sumeru. We perceive the Milky Way galaxy as a disk, but it is actually a mountain-like shape protruding in the middle—just assume I am lacking astronomical knowledge. About one-third of the Milky Way galaxy in the middle belongs to the Trayastrimsa Heaven, with the surrounding two-thirds of the galaxy belonging to the Heavens of the Four Deva Kings, extending from the mountainside to the foothills of Mount Sumeru. The Heavens of the Four Deva Kings is divided into four parts, each governed by a deva king. The region below this, from the foothills of Mount Sumeru to the area almost falling into the sea, belongs to the human world. It's the most remote area of the Milky Way galaxy.

The Four Deva Kings not only govern their heavenly realms but also oversee the human world. We are under the jurisdiction of the Southern Deva King. Sutras describe the lifespan and the characteristics of the world of the Four Deva Kings, which I won't repeat. I'll just note that if the Four Deva Kings were human-sized, the Earth would be as small as a ping-pong ball. In the eyes of the Four Deva Kings, humans on earth are like tiny insects living a fleeting life on a small mud ball.

Details about the beings in the Four Deva Kings are described in the sutras and won't be repeated here.

The Southern Deva King loves the color blue and decorates his realm with sapphires, making the sky appear blue to us. Don't argue it's due to sunlight reflection in the atmosphere—dogs see everything in black and white!

The Eastern Deva King prefers the color pink, so the sky in his realm is pink. The human beings there are taller, live longer than us, with fair and beautiful skin.

For details about the beings in the Trayastrimsa Heaven, you could find and read sutras for reference.

Moving upwards from the top of Mount Sumeru, there are multiple celestial realms layer by layer. Each ascending level offers rewards beyond our imagination. I mention these to give practitioners confidence, even if abstaining from meat would bring considerable future rewards!

Section 04: Emotional Longing and Emotion of Doubting

Why are emotional longing and emotion of doubting on the same level? If you have read the Agama Sutras, you might roughly understand.

In the third heaven of the third dhyana, people feel doubts regarding the surrounding darkness. What's in the darkness? Philosophically, where there is a question, there is certainly an answer—this is a relative relationship. For example, when you ask a question, my satisfactory response is one answer; an unreliable response is another answer; yet not responding at all is also an answer. Every possibility is an answer, depending on how you interpret and accept it.

Let's get back to the topic.

When emotion of doubting arises, hypothetical answers emerge. What's in the darkness? Someone might assume there are others in the darkness—this is where the problem starts! Based on this assumption, a person starts to feel loneliness, which is emotional longing!

In our language habits, there is always a specific target for missing—missing your mother, missing your lover, etc. However, the word *loneliness* has no specific target. Missing a friend, missing family, missing a lover, all fall under loneliness. Thus, the initial emotional longing is more akin to the feeling of loneliness.

Previously, I have explained that the emotion of doubting would evolve into unease, and further into agitation. Likewise, loneliness would quickly evolve into unease, and then agitation.

In the third heaven of the second dhyana, driven by loneliness, you will explore the darkness seeking companions. Hence, emotional longing and emotion of doubting are on the same level and can both be used to penetrate all emotions of suffering.

Moreover, emotional longing is the direct cause of karma. When you dream alone, the dream is indeed a dream. An illusion created by a single person is fragile and easily shattered. But if you seek others out of loneliness, the dream becomes shared, making the illusion more solid as more people join.

Based on loneliness, two cases develop. Some people move around to actively seek others, while other beings remain still to wait for others, thinking: How boring! If only someone came to play with me.

These two desires resonate: the people seeking others are reborn into the dreamscapes of the people waiting for others after death.

The following is the content from the Agama Sutras! The person waiting for others has stronger control over the world he created, while those reborn into this world have weaker control. More importantly, people would lose their previous life memories with each rebirth, leading these newcomers to believe they were created by the original creator of this world. Thus, these newcomers all collectively revere the original creator as the celestial king. This is the origin of creationism.

Creationism wasn't put forward by another religion; the Buddha explained creationism very clearly long ago!

The above is an evolution from top to bottom! What about ordinary beings practicing upwards?

When a human practitioner reaches the third heaven of the first dhyana, the Great Brahma Heaven, he can recall his past lives starting from rebirth in the Great Brahma Heaven until rebirth as a human. He can retrieve these past life memories but not those above the Great Brahma Heaven. Hence, the practitioner believes that the Great Brahma King is the creator, who created the entire world and all sentient beings. Thus, humanity should revere the Great Brahma King—this is the origin of India's four-caste system.

Brahmins, born from Great Brahma's mouth, only need to pray and act as intermediaries between humans and gods to live a carefree life. These are the religious figures.

Kshatriyas, born from Great Brahma's shoulders, the strongest part, hold national power and military strength, thus being the noble class.

Vaishyas, born from Great Brahma's hands used for labor, are laboring commoners, producing food and goods for the two upper noble classes.

Shudras, born from Great Brahma's feet, are thus destined to be trampled and enslaved, forming the slave class.

The lower two classes also have many professions. Not only is intermarriage between different castes prohibited, even intermarriage between different professions is not allowed. Once born into a certain caste or profession, one's fate is sealed for life, with no chance of rising.

Back to the main topic!

Among the Buddha's disciples were the three Kasyapa brothers, not to be confused with the chief disciple Mahakasyapa, but rather the fire-worshipping Kasyapas. Their practice transcended the Great Brahma Heaven, reaching the second heaven of the second dhyana, the Heaven of Infinite Radiance, which has sensations of heat and cold, known as the fire element. The Kasyapa brothers' practice couldn't transcend this heaven, so they considered the fire element to be the fundamental and insurmountable element of the universe, leading them to worship fire. Later, after encountering the Buddha and comparing many supernatural abilities, they fully submitted and formally became his disciples.

Therefore, emotional longing is the initial emotion of suffering—contemplating emotional longing can break through all emotion of suffering. Furthermore, emotional longing is the direct reason for migrating to

another world. Hence, they can be used to migrate to the Pure Land. Amitabha Buddha wishes for beings to be born in his Pure Land, and you also wish to be born in Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land. These two desires resonate, making it easy to be reborn in the Pure Land after death.

Let's further analyze the emotions of suffering!

Emotion of doubting falls under craving for things. Exploring darkness is akin to seeking knowledge, which is also craving for things, while emotional longing falls under craving for beings. After all, craving is craving whether you are craving for people or things. Where there is craving, there is suffering!

After joy comes worry. You worry about losing the love or object you have, then worry develops into fear. You feel sad when you lose the love or objects you had, then sadness develops into anger. After anger comes envy, jealousy, and hatred. These are all negative emotions toward those who still have love and objects.

To summarize the entire emotional development process: emotion of doubting and emotional longing → unease → agitation → joy (sense of happiness) → worry → fear → sadness → anger → envy, jealousy, and hatred.

Look at the joy in the middle: the process of pursuing this joy is agitation, and then you worry about losing it after obtaining it. Suffering both before and after obtaining it!

Thus, the Buddha said that the happiness ordinary people think of is suffering of change! Once it deteriorates or spoils, it immediately turns into suffering. The more joyful you are, the more painful it will be when it deteriorates.

Everyone should carefully observe themselves: are you happy now? Why are you happy? Are you happy because your husband loves you? What if your husband abandons you? Are you happy because of your child? What if your child dies before you?

After coming down the mountain this time, I heard about a ferry accident in South Korea: 304 people died, including 250 students. A vice-principal committed suicide out of guilt, and a mother who lost her twins also committed suicide. The sense of joy and happiness you yearn for is so fragile! Talking more about this makes one heartbroken! Let's forget about it.

The conclusion is: contemplating emotional longing can break through all suffering emotions and also lead to rebirth in the Pure Land! Even if you can't break through suffering emotions to enter the Fourth Dhyana, as long as you reach the third dhyana, even without extinguishing the realms of the five sense faculties, frequently reciting Amitabha's name and thinking of Amitabha during your free time can still lead to rebirth in the Pure Land.

Going or not is a personal choice, you can practice whatever you want! If you contemplate doubts and reach the heavenly realms, you can go to the Tushita Heaven to practice under the guidance of Maitreya Bodhisattva. However, due to the excessive comfort in the heavenly realms, many people won't diligently practice, resulting in continuous samsara. In the Pure Land, there's no downward cycle, allowing one to consistently practice to reach the highest level in the highest grade in the Pure Land until achieving Arhatship.

Section 05: Yang Spirit

Yang Spirit is a radiant globe! Everyone has a Yang Spirit. You perceive yourself as your physical body, therefore you cannot sense your own Yang Spirit. The original glow of Yang Spirit is milky white and translucent.

When the emotion of doubting appears, a gravitational point forms in the center of Yang Spirit, causing the material of Yang Spirit to start rotating. The emotion of doubting eventually evolves into craving for objects, turning the color of Yang Spirit to black. Greed corresponds to the water element. When appetite comes up, saliva flows in the mouth. Floods in the world are caused by the greed of sentient beings. In ancient times, when correlating the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth) with colors, black corresponds to water for a reason.

Emotional longing eventually evolves into sexual desire and slaughter. Sexual desire corresponds to the fire element, and Yang Spirit turns red. Killing is dominated by anger, and anger also corresponds to the fire element. Fire disasters in the world are caused by the anger of sentient beings. People with intense sexual desires fall into various fire hells.

Those who practice above the third dhyana can observe others' Yang Spirits while in deep meditation. Most people's Yang Spirits are black and red which is a mixture of greed, sexual desire, and the tendency to kill. The deeper the color, the more intense the desires. The paler the color of Yang Spirit, and the closer it is to milky white, the higher one's spiritual state.

For those who enter the Way by contemplating emotion of doubting, their Yang Spirits are milky white with a hint of gray; for those who enter the Way by contemplating emotional longing, their Yang Spirits are milky white with a hint of pink. Contemplating emotional longing is a unique skill of the Pure Land—most beings from the Pure Land have pink Yang Spirits.

This is also the principle of observing others' spiritual capacities while in meditation. The colors of Yang Spirits differ slightly depending on various attachments, which will not be explained in detail.

The ability to see one's spiritual capacities by the color of their Yang Spirit is called Dharma Eye. Other supernatural powers have conditions for their emergence, and besides meeting those conditions, one must also learn specific techniques. Except for the most basic psychic power of past-lifetime recall (the ability to recall your past lives), which requires no techniques, all other supernatural powers involve techniques.

In later chapters, specifically in Chapter Seven, I will explain the conditions and principles for the emergence of supernatural powers but will not discuss the techniques for using them—this is also pushing the boundaries! By understanding the principles of how each supernatural power is cultivated, you will not blindly pursue supernatural powers without first meeting the conditions. As I will not teach you the techniques, it will rely on your own abilities to discover.

Seeking supernatural powers ultimately leads to being controlled by evil external forces! You are responsible for your own life and death, which has nothing to do with me. If you die, it's your misfortune!

Section 06: The Diamond Sutra

Let's start with the Four Marks in the Diamond Sutra.

When a Bodhisattva's delusions reach the eleventh level, the Bodhisattva will attempt to observe other sentient beings' delusions. At this point, the notions of self (I) and others (people) simultaneously appear, known in the sutras as subject-object (neng-suo in Chinese). The subject who observes is known as 'self', and the objects being observed are known as 'others', referred to as self-mark and marks of personhood. With self-mark and marks of personhood, the Bodhisattva drops to the level of an Arhat. Further discriminating based on marks of personhood, the Arhat realizes that each sentient being is different, this is called the mark of sentient beings.

On top of the discriminating mind, attachment arises, one becomes an ordinary being, starts the cyclic rebirth, this is called the mark of a lifespan.

A Buddha has no delusion, stays in consummate tranquility, called Great Emptiness or Ultimate Emptiness. A Bodhisattva has delusions but no discriminating mind, known as the state of no mark. An Arhat has developed discriminating minds. Senior Arhats do not discriminate sentient beings, only have self-mark and marks of personhood. Junior Arhats practice discrimination among sentient beings, have developed self-mark, marks of personhood, and mark of sentient beings. Ordinary beings cycle through rebirth in Samsara among the six paths and hold onto all four marks.

The Diamond Sutra primarily teaches the discriminating mind with the target audience being Arhats. At Shakyamuni Buddha's time, Arhats were considered to have mid-level spiritual capacity, Bodhisattvas rank advanced level in spiritual capacity. In Mahayana doctrine, the Diamond Sutra is categorized as mid-level teachings. Bodhidharma passed the Lankavatara Sutra to Huike, which mainly covers the advance from Bodhisattva to Buddha. As spiritual capacities of sentient beings declined, the Lankavatara Sutra became too high-end, so the Diamond Sutra was adopted as the primary guidance during affirmation of an enlightened mind by a master.

Next, what are the five aggregates?

"Consciousness" refers to the delusions arising in the Eighth Consciousness.

"Formation" refers to the discriminating mind of the Seventh Consciousness.

"Perception" refers to the attachment mind in the Sixth Consciousness.

"Sensation" refers to the five sense faculties and the feelings generated.

"Form" refers to material substances, including the physical body, all things in the world, and void.

Next, what are the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination?

"Ignorance" refers to the delusions arising in the Eighth Consciousness.

"Formation" refers to the discriminating mind in the Seventh Consciousness.

"Consciousness" specifically refers to the attachment mind in the Sixth Consciousness that clings to delusion itself.

“Name and forms”, “Name” refers to the name and forms arising in the consciousness, “Form” refers to the objects corresponding to those names.

“Six sense bases” refers to the six sense faculties.

“Contact” refers to the reaction that occurs when the six sense bases interact with the six types of substance.

“Sensation” refers to the feelings arising.

“Craving” refers to longing, wanting.

“Clinging” refers to action, while in an ideological context, it describes that the pull of karma has begun.

“Becoming” refers to the physical body, all things in the world, and void.

The subsequent “birth and death” corresponds to the three aspects of “becoming”: the physical body undergoes birth, aging, sickness and death, experiences sorrow, pain, grief, and anger etc.; all worldly things go through formation, existence, decay, and cessation; void undergoes formation, existence, decay, and emptiness.

These explanations might differ from what you have come across online, I firmly believe this being the true dharma teaching. This interpretation explains what Dharma is—delusion, discrimination, and attachment.

Those with different opinions please do not initiate debate—I am very stubborn! You won’t change my mind, feel free to voice your own views, but no debates! It took me a significant amount of time and effort to gain these insights, I am still practicing in a temple. So, it’s not something that can be altered with a few words by others.

Also, I’m repulsed by those who speak classical prose or quote scripture verbatim! As you have read, so far, all things have been explained in plain words. The Buddha spoke in plain language of the time back in ancient India. All sutras adopted the reader friendly style of the time—not the case nowadays. So, don’t quote the sutras!

Next, I will explain the discriminating mind.

Back in the time when Bodhidharma came to China to spread the Dharma, he taught the Lankavatara Sutra. However, this sutra was too advanced, the teachings are within the Realms of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. As people’s spiritual capacities declined, the Lankavatara Sutra can no longer serve as the core Zen teaching to verify practice. The Diamond Sutra, which is one step lower, was picked as the core principle.

The Diamond Sutra addresses the discriminating mind of an Arhat! Here I point out the core teaching of the sutra instead of going over the entire sutra. Once you understand these, you will have new insights when reading the Diamond Sutra.

There are nine types of discriminating minds, each kind is divided into three states.

Let's take a close look at the discrimination among sentient beings to understand discriminating mind.

The Diamond Sutra mentions self-mark, marks of personhood, mark of sentient beings, and the mark of a lifespan—the discrimination among sentient beings is the mark of sentient beings. What is it like to have discrimination among sentient beings? What is it like to not have discrimination among sentient beings? What is it like to not discriminate among sentient beings?

First, I will explain the difference between having discrimination among sentient beings verses not having discrimination among sentient beings!

Let's take ants as an example. Catch two or more ants of the same species and size, place them in a glass jar. You take a glance at them and then turn around for a few minutes while the ants crawl about. When you look at the ants again, you cannot differentiate which is which. Even if they were replaced by ants of the same size and species, you would not notice. You can only remember how many ants were in the jar, but cannot identify each one. This scenario depicts not having discrimination among sentient beings.

Now if each ant is labeled with a different color—red, yellow, green. You can differentiate them even days later. This scenario illustrates having discrimination among sentient beings.

The common ground between having discrimination among sentient beings and not having discrimination among sentient beings is the concept of individuality! First, divide the ants into individuals, then distinguish them. If you can distinguish based on each ant's characteristics, that's having discrimination; if all ants look the same to you, that is not having discrimination among sentient beings.

Now what is it like to not discriminate among sentient beings?

In simple words, you have the concept of ants but no concept of each ant—this state is not easy to comprehend.

For ants, we already have the concept of individuals, so let's take smaller organisms as an example—bacteria. Before scientists invented microscopes, we didn't know that bacteria existed. For those of us who are not bacteriologists, bacteria are merely a concept. We know that countless bacteria live around us, but we cannot distinguish them, i.e., no concept of individuality—let alone distinguish each kind or one among one kind. Our understanding of bacteria is in the state of no discrimination—knowing that they exist, but nothing more.

Another example, I don't care about vegetables. I eat vegetables daily but do not know the names. I eat whatever is available, not bothered with names. If you ask me what's on the mountain, I will say there are trees and grass, maybe some shrubs. I recognize some trees, but hardly any grass. To my knowledge, tall ones with trunks are trees, short ones with no trunk are grass. I only know that there is grass—that is no discrimination. When we look at a lawn, we see individual grass—that's not having discrimination. Botanists know many grass types, each with distinct names and features, some edible, some medicinal, some poisonous, that is having discrimination.

For an Arhat having discrimination among sentient beings, each sentient being is different and has its own characteristics. When an Arhat achieves the state of non-discrimination, all sentient beings are the same; although the concept of individuality remains, no sentient being has unique characteristics—parents

and enemies alike are just sentient beings. When an Arhat reaches the state of eradicating discrimination among sentient beings, one enters the state of no discrimination. This Arhat now only knows there are sentient beings, no longer having the concept of individuality—sentient beings become another word for the entire group.

After an Arhat has broken the discrimination of sentient beings, the next stage is to transcend the discrimination between self and others, which is easy to understand!

The "others" here refer to other people or sentient beings. When there is discrimination between self and others, "self" and "others" are different; in the state of non-discrimination of self and others, "self" and "others" are the same. Both states retain individual concepts of "self" and "others". When the discrimination between self and others is eradicated, one enters the state of no discrimination between self and others, only "self" remains. Bodhisattvas only have self-mark, only the concept of self in their consciousness. They do not have marks of personhood and marks of sentient beings. (In *Zazen 2*, Shifu Taiguanglin revised the explanation, clarifying that Bodhisattvas have no self-mark.)

Some people may then become confused—how can Bodhisattvas liberate sentient beings without the mark of sentient beings? I have no discrimination between individual blades of grass. Precisely because of the lack of discrimination, I water all grass equally, without bias. Grass objectively exists and each blade of grass is different—this is an objective reality; it is merely that such distinctions do not exist in my consciousness.

If this explanation is still unclear to you, then do not overthink it—this is not a state that ordinary beings can empirically comprehend. Overthinking leads to headaches! The Dharma is to be practiced, not thought about.

Then, let's talk about the third type of discrimination—the discrimination of sequence. As previously mentioned, the concept of time arises from this.

How does the discrimination of Sequence arise?

When someone is immersed in delusions, let's take numbers as an example. First you think of 1, then 2, then 3, then 1 again, then 2, then 3, followed by 3, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 4, 5, 3, 5, 6, etc., continuously generate delusions.

When you think of 1 many times, when 1 appears again, you suddenly recognize that this 1 has ever been thought of before. This "ever" is the recognition of the past; the 1 that has ever been thought of existed in the past, and the moment when this 1 appears again is the present. Hereby, the distinction between past and present arises, and the concept of time begins.

What about the future?

The future actually does not exist! To us, the future does not exist either. There is only the present and the past—the future is merely our inertia of generating delusions!

Yesterday, you went to work and came home, and the day before yesterday you also went to work and came home. You then believe you will go to work and come home tomorrow. This routine is karma, and it

is also habit. Our karma and habits drive us to continue creating delusions, while the future actually does not exist. You might die unexpectedly tonight, yet you still prepare for tomorrow. It is said that sixty thousand people die in traffic accidents in China each year. Those people followed their usual routine to leave home without expectations of dying, they died nonetheless.

For ordinary beings, the future fundamentally does not exist. Predictions of the future by the so-called power of knowing past and future lives also rely on the karma generated by your past behaviors. The fate of people in this world is overseen by designated deities who pre-arrange the major outlines of people's lives—the predetermined script perceived by the power of knowing past and future lives.

When one's practice reaches the state of non-discrimination of Sequence, the distinction between past and present disappears—past and present become the same.

With continued practice, one enters the state of no discrimination of Sequence. The concepts of past and present vanish, with mere delusion remaining—a state beyond expression in words!

Time is even harder to explain than the discrimination of sentient beings, so it is to be looked through, not looked into.

Section 07: The Five Vehicles of Buddhism

Dharma is divided into five vehicles, from the lowest to the highest: the Human and Deva Vehicle for Merit and Virtue, the Disciple Vehicle for Relief from Suffering, the Arhat Vehicle for Liberation, the Bodhisattva Vehicle for the Six Paramitas, and the Buddha Vehicle for Nirvana.

The Buddha Vehicle for Nirvana teaches how Bodhisattvas extinguish eleven types of delusions to become Buddhas.

The Bodhisattva Vehicle for the Six Paramitas instructs how Arhats extinguish nine types of discriminating minds to become first ground Bodhisattvas.

The Arhat Vehicle for Liberation explains how disciples practice the Formless Realm Dhyana to become Arhats.

The Disciple Vehicle for Relief from Suffering describes how ordinary humans practice the four dhyanas to become disciples.

The Human and Deva Vehicle for Merit and Virtue teaches how to cultivate merit and virtue, preparing for future practice.

The Disciple Vehicle for Relief from Suffering includes five stages of dhyana: the Desire Realm Dhyana, plus the First Dhyana, the Second Dhyana, the Third Dhyana, and the Fourth Dhyana, five dhyanas in total.

The Arhat Vehicle for Liberation encompasses the four dhyanas in the Formless Realm.

The Bodhisattva Vehicle for the Six Paramitas includes the nine dhyanas of the Arhat.

The Buddha Vehicle for Nirvana includes the ten grounds of Bodhisattvas plus the Bodhisattvas ground of equal enlightenment, eleven grounds in total.

Bodhisattvas do not enter or exit dhyana, having already extinguished the practice of dhyana, thus these stages are called *grounds*. Apart from the Bodhisattvas ground of equal enlightenment, the remaining grounds and dhyanas are combined into ten grounds and eighteen dhyanas.

We will not discuss the Buddhas Vehicle and the Bodhisattva Vehicle, they pertain to post-liberation matters! If you reach the Western Pure Land, great Bodhisattvas will naturally teach you, or you can learn from Maitreya Bodhisattva in the Tushita Heaven.

We will also not delve into the lowest Human and Deva Vehicle for Merit and Virtue. This primarily involves cultivating merit and how to conduct oneself and handle affairs; if becoming a Buddhist monk, then how to be a qualified monastic, etc.

This book primarily focuses on the Disciple Vehicle for Relief from Suffering and the Arhat Vehicle for Liberation, with particular emphasis on the Disciple Vehicle for Relief from Suffering.

Section 08: The Five Wisdoms

In consciousness-only, wisdom is divided into five sections, corresponding to the Five Vehicles of Buddhism.

Starting from the bottom, the first wisdom is called the Wisdom of Accomplishing Activities, corresponding to the Human and Deva Vehicle of Merit and Virtue. This is straightforward. The Wisdom of Accomplishing Activities, as the name implies, is the wisdom that empowers you to succeed in whatever mundane dharma you practice. As long as you have deep faith in cause and effect, believe in reincarnation, and first consider others and possible consequences in all conduct, you possess the Wisdom of Accomplishing Activities.

The second wisdom is the Wisdom of Marvelous Observation, corresponding to the Disciple Vehicle for Relief from Suffering. This wisdom is the true wisdom that appears after one reaches the Fourth Dhyana. I will explain this true wisdom later, so let’s finish discussing the other three wisdoms first.

The third is called the Wisdom of the Equality of the Nature of All Things, corresponding to the Arhat Vehicle for Liberation. After becoming an arhat, you will have no attachment. One without attachment views the world with equality. One is one, two is two. Even though one and two are different, I am not attached to either one or two. Therefore, I can treat both equally, which is called the Wisdom of Equality of the Nature of All Things.

To illustrate with an example, I have no sexual desire nor emotional longing. Consequently, men are men and women are women to me. I understand that men and women are different. However, I neither like women nor men, so I treat both genders equally. I won't gaze at beautiful women nor dislike seeing men.

The fourth is called the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom, corresponding to the Bodhisattva Vehicle of the Six Paramitas. When one becomes a Bodhisattva, the discriminating mind disappears. A person without a

discriminating mind sees the world in perfect harmony and unobstructed unity: one is two, and two is one. Bodhisattvas use harmonious and unobstructed delusions to perceive the world, akin to using a mirror that reflects all worlds in it without distinction.

In the supernatural powers of a Bodhisattva, as soon as a thought arises, the answer immediately appears. For instance, "What is someone doing and where?" As soon as the Bodhisattva has this thought, the answer appears in their consciousness, allowing the Bodhisattva to see what the person is doing and where they are.

Bodhisattvas do not enter or exit Dhyana, they use their delusions to perceive the entire world. From here on, it becomes hard to describe with words, so just take it as it is without getting entangled in such matters.

The fifth is called the Wisdom of the Nature of the Dharma Realm, corresponding to the Buddha Vehicle of Nirvana. Upon becoming a Buddha, delusions disappear. One without delusions has integrated with the Dharma Realm. The Dharma Realm is the essential nature of the Buddha, and the Buddha's essential nature is the Dharma Realm.

Just as we can know all the sensations within our body while meditating, the entire Dharma Realm is within the consciousness of the Buddha. The Buddha inherently knows everything happening within the Dharma Realm without needing any delusions. Therefore, as you read my article, think, and make little movements, the Buddha knows all of it.

I have now explained all five sections of wisdom!

Let’s focus on the Wisdom of Marvelous Observation—the true wisdom.

As long as you attain the Fourth Dhyana, you will gain the true wisdom, a wisdom that observes the world as it is. Although I cannot disclose specifics of the meditative states, I can touch upon related concepts.

Let me tell you a true story. In Gyeongnam Province, South Korea, there is a large temple called Haeinsa, which houses the woodcarving Buddhist Tripitaka and is one of the eight major temples of the Jogye Order in Korea. The protagonist of the story is a monk from this temple.

One day, the monk went to pick chestnuts in the mountains with others. He climbed up a chestnut tree but accidentally fell down. After he got up, the first thing that came to his mind was to go home and have a look, so he wandered back to his former home in a daze.

At home were his mother and elder sister, with his sister busy working. Seeing his sister made him happy, and he wanted to greet her. Approaching her, however, made her shiver and start vomiting. Their mother rushed out, throwing glutinous rice at the sister and her surroundings while shouting, “Go away, wild ghost!”

The monk felt saddened that his mother and sister didn’t welcome him. He thought he should return to his true home, the Haeinsa Temple, and started heading back to the temple.

Halfway back, a beautiful woman approached and pulled him, asking if he could marry her as she had no husband, which left the monk flustered. Though she was persistent, he hesitated and ultimately refused, thinking, “I am already an ordained monk; how can I marry a woman?”

Continuing his journey, he saw a group of hunters barbequing freshly caught deer by the roadside. The aroma was tantalizing. The hunters noticed the monk and invited him to join. Despite feeling hungry and tempted, he hesitated and eventually refused, thinking, “As a monk, I have taken the Bhikkhu precepts and vowed before the Buddha not to eat meat from sentient beings. How can I break this precept?”

He continued on until he came across a group of young men and women singing and dancing by the river. They seemed to be out for fun. Upon seeing the monk, they tried to pull him in to join their fun. Yet again, he hesitated but declined, thinking, “The precepts stipulate a Bhikkhu must not watch singing and dancing, let alone participate. It's better to abide by the precepts.”

The monk resumed his journey and returned to the Haeinsa Temple. He saw other monks gathered in front of the Nirvana Hall and joined them, noticing they were chanting sutras over a corpse. The monk wondered, “I was only away for half a day, and someone had already died. Truly, life is unpredictable!” As he pushed forward, he saw two leading monks—one striking the wooden fish and the other ringing a bell, both chanting devoutly. The content of the chant was unfamiliar, though: one chanted ginkgo wood alms bowl, and the other a sutra title. Curious about what they were chanting, he decided to check who the deceased was. Getting closer and looking carefully, he was shocked to find that the corpse was his own!

This was quite a shock. With this fright, his consciousness instantly returned to his body. He abruptly opened his eyes with a loud exclamation, startling the surrounding monks.

Once everyone calmed down, the monk asked the two monks leading the chanting, “I heard you chant something other than sutras—one was chanting alms bowl, and the other a sutra title. What’s going on?” The two monks were embarrassed and didn’t know how to answer. Under repeated questioning, however, they told the truth. One admitted he thought he could take the ginkgo wood alms bow he coveted now that the monk was dead. The other said he hoped to take the monk’s sutra he desired now that he was dead. The monk told everyone what he had just experienced, and everyone sighed in amazement.

Once the monk regained his composure, he asked to be taken back along the route to see the people who had pulled him. At the spot by the river where the group of young men and women were singing and dancing, he saw a group of golden frogs croaking loudly.—which startled him! Further back, at the place where the hunters were roasting deer meat, he discovered a large wasp nest with many wasps swarming in and out. The monk was even more astonished! Continuing back, at the spot where the beautiful woman had tried to pull him to marry, he found a large snake coiling around its eggs.

Having gone through this life-and-death experience, the monk felt the fragility of life and realized that death was just a breath away. Recognizing that his practice was far from achieving liberation, he decided not to go out anymore and dedicated himself to diligent practice. Eventually, he became a renowned monk in the region.

For those of you practicing now, if your practice is adequate in this lifetime, you will ascend to heavenly realms immediately after death. Conversely, if you have committed many bad deeds, you will descend to hell immediately after death.

However, for those who cannot ascend to heaven or descend to hell immediately, they will enter the post-mortem state (bardo). The person's spirit hovers near the corpse for 24 hours, waiting to be taken to see Yama, the King of Hell. During this period, vengeful creditors may transform into your loved ones to lure you into the three lower realms. If you have attained true wisdom, these vengeful creditors will reveal their true forms to you. At this level of practice, you will ascend to heaven or other Buddha-lands directly after death, and will not enter the post-mortem state at all.

The so-called true wisdom is like this: if you have no lust, a snake is seen as a snake; if you have lust, your lust becomes an obstacle, causing the snake to appear as a beautiful woman in your eyes. If you do not have the habit of killing and eating meat, a wasp nest is seen as just a wasp nest; if you still have the habit of killing and eating meat, such habits become obstacles, making the wasp nest appear as delicious roasted meat to you. Similarly, if you enjoy dancing, singing, and other entertainment activities, then frogs will appear as men and women singing and dancing joyfully.

If the monk had been enticed by the beautiful woman, he would be reborn as a snake; attracted by the roasted meat, he would be reborn as a wasp; lured by the dancing and singing young people, he would be reborn as a golden frog.

Those who attain the Fourth Dhyana have eliminated verbal delusions, focused attention, and no longer have any worldly attachments or desires. The world they see in meditation is the true world—sentient beings are just sentient beings, suffering is just suffering. They will no longer be hindered by illusions formed by their own attachments and habits.

There are also stories in books about a practitioner who died and saw a huge, splendid palace, feeling it would be wonderful to live there. Just as he was about to enter, an old man in white appeared and stopped him, telling him not to go in and to go back. When he revived and went to look, he found that there was only a large bird's nest where the palace had been.

Those who reach the Fourth Dhyana attain true wisdom and see the world as it truly is! When observing the suffering of sentient beings, they can discern the cause of that suffering and address it accordingly—not engaging in useless empty theories!

For sentient beings, the world is real, and suffering is real. If you want to liberate yourself from real suffering, then you must engage in genuine practice—do not waste your precious time braging!

Section 09: The Fate of Ordinary People

Everyone wants to know what practice stages they have reached, how to judge it, and where they will go after death. What determines the world a person is reborn into after death? There are four criteria:

First, habits—these are various attachments the person ties to;

Second, the karma they have created;

Third, the power of their own vows;

Fourth, the empowerment from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Among these, habit and karma influence each other and cannot be separated. Your habits drive you to create corresponding karma, which then leads you to be reborn in a world where you could continue to create such karma, thereby reinforcing your habits. Like a rolling snowball, it grows larger and larger, eventually leading to hell. Of these two, habit is the hard criterion with no room for maneuver.

Whatever habits you have will determine what world you are reborn into!

If you love eating meat and haven't refrained from it in your entire life of practice, you can only be reborn in the human realm or lower, with the human realm being the best possible result—because from the Heavens of the four Heavenly Kings upward, there is no killing or eating meat. If you want to eat meat, you must be reborn in the human realm or lower worlds.

Our practice is the process of eliminating various habits!

After passing the first criterion, let’s then see the karma created.

Even if you have eliminated the habit of eating meat, the sentient beings you have eaten might not let you go. Their resentment could drag you into a world lower than the human realm. To be eaten in return, the best scenario would be the animal realm. Cases of humans eating humans do exist, but they are rare.

So, how much can practice help in eliminating karma?

Not much! Practice is a method to eliminate habits, but it is not the main method for eliminating karma. The only way to eliminate karma is to endure retribution—there is no leeway!

So, is reciting sutras, mantras, and dedicating merit, as well as releasing captive lives, all useless?

It is useful! For example, if you killed someone in a past life and he now comes for retribution, you have recited sutras and mantras to dedicate the merit to him, along with deeply repenting and asking for forgiveness. If he doesn’t accept, you continue to release captive lives or print and distribute Buddhist texts, dedicating the merit to him. If he still doesn’t accept, your sincerity might move the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to arbitrate between you two, telling him that your merit is enough to help him be reborn in a good realm. He would be told that living in hatred makes liberation impossible, causing great suffering, and that it is better to be forgiving when you have the power to do so. He might realize that retaliating would continue the cycle of vengeance indefinitely. If he still refuses to forgive and insists on retribution, you would have no choice but to exchange your life for his to settle the debt.

Therefore, in principle, practice cannot eliminate karma!

We say it is better to make peace than to make enemies; one should tolerate whenever possible. Forgiving others is easy; seeking forgiveness from others is not impossible, but it's certainly not easy. If you encounter a stubborn creditor, you just have to accept your bad luck.

Therefore, we place great importance on repentance! If you have no intention of repenting, and are not sincerely apologizing but only creating merit to dedicate, it will be of little use.

Merit is merit and will bring corresponding good results. Evil karma is evil karma; when someone comes to seek repayment, it cannot be resolved without compensating in some way. If they forgive you, you won't have to die! You might fall ill for half a year, get hit by a car, or suffer significant financial losses. This is settling the debt—enduring a minor disaster to eliminate a major one, enduring retribution in advance, which is the best outcome.

If you want to dedicate merit for your relatives to reconcile with someone else's creditor, it becomes even more challenging. If the concerned person believes in Buddhism and is willing to repent, it is easier. However, if they do not believe or repent, dedicating merit might not only be ineffective but could cause the creditor to target you instead. If your sincerity moves the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they may come to arbitrate on your behalf. If the creditor is kind-hearted, the arbitration might succeed, and they might follow the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to reincarnate. But if the creditor is an ordinary person who insists on receiving an apology directly from the person involved, your dedication becomes of little use.

People are living beings; if you break something public, paying compensation would settle it as it belongs to the public—nobody would hold a grudge. But harming other human beings is not something that can be easily resolved with money.

The conclusion is: one should broadly practice the Ten Good Deeds to create merit, strictly uphold the precepts, and prevent from creating evil karma.

The third criterion is personal vows—this is easy to understand.

Bodhisattvas and Arhats can return by their vows, and so can humans, but this vow can only work from higher to lower realms. If you have reached the Third Dhyana, you can reach the three Heavens of the Third Dhyana. Then you vow to go to the heavens of the Second Dhyana, the heavens of the First Dhyana, the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm, or to the human realm to continue practicing—that is possible. But if you haven't even refrained from eating meat and vow to ascend to the heavenly realms, you are dreaming! It is completely impossible!

The last criterion is empowerment from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

This depends on your conduct after accepting Buddhism or becoming a Buddhist monk. Firstly, you must pass the first criterion of habits. If your karma is severe enough to drag you into the three lower realms, but after accepting Buddhism you strictly uphold precepts, diligently practice, do good deeds and charity, and propagate the Dharma to save human beings, then even if ghost servants come to drag you away at death, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas could provide strong empowerment, ensuring you are reborn in the human realm and could still hear the Dharma. This can only ensure rebirth in the human realm, which is already quite good! If, after accepting Buddhism or becoming a Buddhist monk, you do not follow the rules and recklessly create karma, you are basically beyond reclaim.

Many monks spend their lives being supported by offerings but do not practice, uphold precepts, or transmit the Dharma, indulging in a comfortable life—so that they are reborn in the animal realm. Around

mountain temples, there are often many snakes and frogs, not all of which were lazy monks in past lives, but not a few. Sometimes, large snakes enter the temple and coil up on the cushions, and people say, "This one must have been a monk at this temple in a past life." Rebirth in the animal realm instead of the hungry ghost realm is already due to having been in the temple, exposed to incense and the Dharma.

Causality is inevitable—there is no slightest ambiguity!

Someone asked: Do great practitioners escape causality?

Everyone knows the story of Master Baizhang and the fox! I won't elaborate on unobscured causality, but I will say that it is definitely falling under karma! Even great Bodhisattvas of the ten grounds, when they bring their reward bodies with karma to the human world, if they create unnecessary karma, they will also fall into causality, and one moment of inattention can prevent their return.

Chapter 2: From the Beginning to Desire Realm Meditation

Section 01: Karmic Obstacles

The post about unblocking the Ren and Du Meridians was completely deleted. The admin replied that it violated the Baidu Tieba's rules, without saying which stipulation. Well, we'll talk about it later.

The first obstacle on the path from an ordinary person to Buddha is karmic obstacles!

Whether you vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, to stay by Maitreya Bodhisattva's side, or to liberate yourself from the cycle of birth and death to become an Arhat, all of it means leaving the Saha World. It's like being deep in debt and wanting to emigrate—your creditors surely won't allow it.

Many people here love to talk about emptiness—this kind of emptiness, that kind of emptiness. But sorry, everything is real!

If you owe a debt, you have to pay it back. The debt is real because your creditor believes it is real. If you tell your creditor that "money is empty," do you think that'll work? If someone owes you money and you say "money is empty," and let them go, that would count as your merit of generosity. But if you owe someone, you must repay it!

Owing money doesn't matter, and even owing a life doesn't matter either, at worst, they might kill you and the debt is written off! But emotional debts? That's the real trouble. If you break someone's heart, they may come back to make you suffer the same way. You might understand that emotions are "empty," but the pain, grief, sorrow—it still cuts deep and torments you for real.

So, what's the point of talking about emptiness! Just pay your debts straightforwardly.

If your creditor is a living person, it's still manageable—they might abuse you, or swindle money from you, but you can let it slide. If your husband hits you, you can cover your head with a quilt, or even, if that doesn't work, call the police or get a divorce, etc.

The scariest thing is when invisible beings from the ghost realms come to collect their debts! You can't see them, but they constantly affect you—bringing bad luck, illness, constant bumps and bruises, mental fog. In more intense cases, it can even lead to sleep paralysis, the so-called "body pressed by a ghost".

How to repay karmic debts to beings from the ghost realm? Chant the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra! When you start your practice, chant it for at least a year! Even people who seemed fine before may suddenly find karmic creditors showing up once they commence practice—this is actually a good sign. But

some people give up as soon as trouble arises, thinking they have no predestined relationship to Dharma. Don't quit—keep going!

You should also release captive animals and dedicate the merit! This brings great merits and helps rapidly eliminate karmic obstacles. Set aside part of your income each month and release animals regularly. Karmic creditors come in waves—send off one group, and another takes its place. Yama, the King of Hell, is in charge of this! Once you start practicing, a few future karmic creditors may be allowed to collect the debts early. You send some off, more get scheduled—Yama is actually quite humane! After all, you've lived countless lifetimes and owe more creditors than you can count. If they all showed up at once, this could kill you hundreds of times over and still not be done. So, let them come bit by bit. Moreover, true practitioners receive empowerment from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas—they won't let your life be taken. So, just grit your teeth and get through the rough patches.

The Buddha also said that when facing destiny, all you can do is accept it—that is endurance! If something can be changed through your own effort, it's not really destiny. So, don't complain—everything is the consequence of your own behavior. If you've racked up karmic debt, sooner or later you'll have to pay it back.

When we speak of rebirth(to the Pure Land) with karma, that depends on how much karma you're carrying. Since delusions can be counted, karma can be measured too. Rebirth (to the Pure Land) requires meeting a certain standard—but that standard isn't easily described in words. With the Kṣitigarbha Divination Sutra, you can assess the good and bad karma from your past lives yourself.

In short, repaying karmic debts is a must—do as much as you can! If you have money, release more captive animals.

Section 02: Refrain from Strife, Killing, and Eating Meat

In Chapter One, we learned that the last attachment that arises is killing and eating meat.

Love develops into hatred →hatred evolves into killing → killing leads to eating, further progression leads to killing then to strife. It begins with just killing, then elevates to torturing to death, eventually escalating into strife—strife leads to rebirth in the Asura realm. Those who enjoy competitive games may keenly relate: at first, defeating your opponent is satisfying, then they find themselves "bullying the novices", using advanced techniques to completely crush novices and savoring the thrill. Then, one becomes a sophisticated player, neglecting novices and seeking challenges by competing against advanced players. At this point only a hard-fought win excites them, especially winning byslim margin at crucial moments, the sense of triumph is utterly ineffable.

When the thirst for killing grows into a relish in strife, you are not far from Asura Realm! Therefore, the first step for a practitioner is to refrain from strife, don't argue, don't quarrel, practice endurance whenever possible.

This isn't any special technique—peace keeping goes along with contemporary moral standards! Always watch ourselves, when emotions such as hatred or anger arise, immediately be aware, leave the scene would be ideal.

The Universal Gate Chapter of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Sutra states that for those with intense resentment, reciting the name of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva helps diminish their hatred. Regularly reciting Avalokitesvara's name works, as is chanting Amitabha Buddha's name—reciting any Buddha works. The Pure Land Dharma Gateway is excellent in that one can recite anytime, anywhere; no need to allocate specific time or secure a location for practice.

Next comes abstaining from killing and eating meat!

For Buddhists, non-killing is the bottom line—this is easy for most people to adhere to. Regarding insects like mosquitoes, flies, and cockroaches, try to avoid killing, but if you have to, don't be too hard on yourself—just recite Buddha's name and dedicate merit to them. It's indeed killing karma, however perfection is hard to obtain, In this world, even walking in summer, we might step on ants. We can only walk mindfully.

Now the hardest one—stop eating meat!

Some argue that eating Threefold Pure Meats is okay—that is really a convenience method. Nowadays, Theravada Buddhism does not prohibit meat eating. There is no kitchen in their monasteries, monks beg for food in the streets and eat whatever they are given.

Why does this divergence exist between Mahayana and Theravada? This takes us back to when the Buddha was alive!

The Buddha taught Dharma for 49 years, spending the first 20 years teaching Theravada doctrines, which are scripted in Agama Sutras. Had he required newly ordained disciples to avoid this and that, including refraining from meat, it would have been overly strict. No one would want to follow. Thus, initially, the Buddha adopted convenient teaching! Unfortunately, some disciples who studied Theravada teachings, considering their learning complete, returned to their homelands to propagate the Dharma. Most disciples came from various parts of India, hence returning to those regions. Later on, Dharma keeps on spreading, reaching Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

In his final teaching years, the Buddha revealed Mahayana doctrines. He explained that the meat eaten in earlier was conjured by his supernatural powers—those had no soul, so eating those did not generate negative karma! However, after the Buddha's parinirvana, no one possessed such capability. Therefore, later generation disciples should refrain from eating meat—as long as the habit of killing persists, one cannot escape Samsara!

After the Buddha's parinirvana, Mahayana disciples traveled across India to spread the Dharma, and found that the earlier Theravada disciples had already firmly established their presence. These Theravada disciples began attacking those Mahayana followers, alleging their teachings were neither Buddha's direct words nor authentic Dharma. . They prohibited Mahayana teaching, forcing its adherents northward.

The Buddha was Nepali, this is well known. Surrounding Nepal, Theravada Buddhism spread south reaching India and east to Southeast Asia. Mahayana Buddhism spread to the west to Central Asia, then to the north, and east to China, Korea, and Japan.

Debate between Mahayana and Theravada has been going on for over a thousand years Meat consumption is only a minor topic—there are many other points of divergence that we won't dig into here. The history of Tibetan Buddhism is yet another topic, with its own distinctions, we won't go into detail on that either.

Let's just focus on refraining from meat eating, which is a must. How exactly does one cease eating meat?

First, you need to establish the correct perspective. If you believe eating Threefold Pure Meats is acceptable, then you will never quit eating meat in your lifetime. All phenomena are created by the mind! Whether it's abstaining from eating meat, eliminating sexual desire, or letting go of attachments during deeper meditation practice, you must first have the correct mindset. You must take the vow to abstain from meat eating and practice with this vow power. Only in this way, you have a chance to quit eating meat.

Abstaining from meat requires no formal meditation. Simply correct your mindset and stop eating meat. The specific approach can be flexible—chanting Buddha's name, reciting sutras, or reciting mantras all work. Practice this consistently for about seven years, and you'll generally succeed in abstaining from meat.

What is the criterion of successful quit meat eating? Upkeeping Precepts in Dreams—as previously mentioned.

After abstaining from meat for three years, in your dream you are starving, someone offers you meat and you eat it without hesitation—this means you failed.

After three more years of practice, in your dream you are starving, someone offers you meat, say this time you hesitate a bit and still eat it—again you failed.

After a few more years of practice, again in your dream you are starving. Someone offers you meat, you declare that you are practicing Bodhi Path with great compassion, would rather starve to death than eat the flesh of other sentient beings. Congratulations! You have successfully upkept the second precept against killing!

Do all practitioners experience such dreams? Definitely! If you genuinely commit to abstaining from meat and practicing diligently, such dreams will surely occur.

Our goal is liberation after death! As explained earlier in Three Realms teaching, you should understand that every form of attachment corresponds to a specific realm of existence.

If you completely quit the habit of killing and eating meat, based on the first criterion in the four deciding factors on destination after death, habits, you can ascend to the Heaven of the Four Deva Kings. If you did not commit major evil deeds in your lifetime, adhere to the Five Precepts, and recite Buddha's name, even without practicing meditation, you can still go there.

If you performed good deeds and acts of generosity, and accumulated a certain amount of meritss, you can ascend to the Trayastrimsa Heaven. If you perform great deeds of virtue and accumulate lots of meritss, you may even attain a celestial position. Sure there needs to be a vacancy.

Starting from Indra, none of the deities under the Indra King achieved celestial beings through practicing, instead became gods based on their meritss. As we all know, sutras talk about this Indra, in one of his past lives, he worked as a women's affairs community official, once he saw a dilapidated temple, he organized 32 village women to fund and repair that temple. This act of virtue blossomed and led to him being Indra. Although this Indra had also practiced, practice was not the deciding factor in this case—karmic merit is key.

Here, we consider only the first criterion: habits! The other three—karmic force, the power of vows, and empowerment from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas—vary individually and lie beyond our scope.Habits alone will be considered hereafter as well.Whenever assessing which heaven one can ascend to with some level of practice, only habits are evaluated, with no other factors are considered.

The Heaven of the Four Deva Kings and Trayastrimsa Heaven are called Earth-Dwelling Heavens. Although they are in the heavenly realms, beings there live on ground. Above that, starting from the Heaven of Yama, beings hover in air—it takes actual practice to ascend to these Heavens.

Among the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm, the upper four heavens are accessed based on the extent of eradicating sexual desire. To completely eliminate sexual desire, you must practice meditation! Reciting sutras or mantras alone doesn't eliminate sexual desire entirely.

Section 03: Eliminating Eighty Percent of Sexual Desire—"Without eradicating sexual desire, one cannot escape Samsara"

Prior to the Buddha entering parinirvana, he appointed Mahakassapa as successor. Before appointing him, it's said that three significant confirmations took place. On one occasion, the Buddha made room for Mahakassapa to share his chair. On another, the Buddha famously held a flower in silence and only Mahakassapa smiled; the final confirmation, the Buddha entered parinirvana with his feet outside the coffin, waiting for Mahakassapa, who was away at the time, to return.

After Mahakassapa became the leader of the Sangha, Ānanda came to him and asked, "Besides robe and bowl, anything else Buddha has passed on to you?"

Mahakassapa replied, "Take down the flagpole at gateway!"

This flagpole was a symbol at the time, similar to the banners hung above the store entrance today—the flag represents the sacred grounds of Buddhism.

So, what did Mahakassapa exactly mean? Here, the flagpole carries a hidden meaning—it metaphorically refers to the male organ. Mahakassapa meant: if you want to attain enlightenment, you must first "take down" the male organ—in other words, you must eradicate sexual desire completely. By the time the Buddha passed into parinirvana, Ānanda still had not eradicated his sexual desire. Later, when

Mahakassapa led the Sangha to compile sutras, he expelled Ānanda from the assembly, citing his inability to overcome sexual desire as the reason.

Eliminating sexual desire is the first major hurdle during practice! Only by eliminating sexual desire can one proceed to more advanced states of meditation. “Without eliminating sexual desire, one cannot escape Samsara”—original quote from the Surangama Sutra!

So, how can ordinary beings eliminate sexual desire? Stay tuned for the next chapter!

If you practice consistently—whether reciting mantras or sutras—your sexual desire will gradually reduce, it may still flare up periodically.

Here is an analogy: suppose your mind harbors 100 “points” of latent sexual desire. As you practice, one day, some of those might surface all of a sudden, let's say 30 points, those 30 points may torment you for an entire month. Your mind is consumed with thoughts of women, awake or asleep—it’s agonizing! If you lose control and resort to masturbation, say three to five times a day, you’ll be utterly exhausted in a few days. At this point, you should exercise! While exercising, chant mantras desperately. Don’t give up! Otherwise, this situation will persist, you won't be able to live a normal life. Once you endure this round, you will be able to practice comfortably for about half a year—during which your sexual desire will be noticeably weaker than before!

Then comes the second wave. 30 points released last time, 70 points remain—this time, about 20 points of leakage. It’s milder than the first wave, the agony would last roughly three weeks. Once you endure this second round, you’ll enjoy another comfortable practice period, about half a year—during which your sexual desire will be even weaker than before the first round. You’ll feel more and more relaxed.

Next, another flare-up occurs. With 50 points left, 15 points may leak this time—and so on.

When your sexual desire decreases to below 20 points, you’ll rarely experience sexual desires on average days. Certain circumstances might still trigger excitement—eliminating this final 20 points requires meditation.

For beginners with no experience of reciting sutras or mantras, nor experience of sexual desire flare-ups, my advice is that you take it slowly with practicing meditation—don’t rush to clear up the meridians! Here is why, during meditation, if your sexual desire erupts, it won’t be a 30 points leakage—it could be the entire 70 or even 80 points—you might find yourself on the edge of self-destruction! You may enter a state of confusion and dottiness even with broad daylight, start hallucinations and see everyone as a sexual partner. The sutras say, “When lust is a blaze, one picks a sexual partner with no judgment, even animals are not spared.” To bystanders? it seems like you've descended into severe mental instability or even psychosis!

I emphasize this to alert beginners, don’t recklessly push forward, don't be overly ambitious. The above reiteration serves as a warning at length.

Practice must not be rushed, make steady progress continuously, one step at a time.

All the scenarios described above—happened to me! Especially when it came to the very last bit of sexual desire, at that time I was able to enter dhyana and observe people and happenings around me. I saw three ghosts approaching, wanting to absorb my essence, this suddenly fired my sexual desire , it was excruciating pain. Eventually I vowed that after attaining enlightenment, I would return to liberate these ghosts. This along with empowerment from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, I barely made it out in one piece.

Another instance prior to the above encounter, when I was reciting the Great Compassion Mantra—800 repetitions a day—continuing even in dreams, one day I woke up with my mind filled with the illusion of stabbing people with knives—that was my first habitual tendency eruption. I had no idea what that was! Intense agony, I wonder if I was the reincarnation of a psychopathic murderer. I was so scared that while eating in a public area, I only took a spoon, afraid that if I had chopsticks, I might stab the person next to me. Not able to take it much longer, I went home and hid in a room to chant mantras. Later, I went to see a movie with a friend—I can't remember the movie title—there's a scene of someone stabbing another's throat with a dagger, the visuals were very vivid, with blood splattering everywhere. After that movie scene, my crazy delusions disappeared, I'm back to normal.

If you practice and have never experienced this type of habitual tendency surfacing or wild delusional fantasies flooding, please don't hastily attempt meditation. An outburst of those deeply ingrained habits could be catastrophic—keep in mind!

Section 04: Opening up the Ren and Du Meridians—Three Qi return to the Origin

Let's discuss Dhyana through two aspects: the physical aspect and the conscious aspect.

Let's start with the physical aspect—skipping lengthy theory here! The body is also illusionary, formed by delusions, discriminations, and attachments. Nonetheless, sensations from our body constantly bother us, preventing the mind from calming down. A sick person is unable to feel serene! Therefore, the first step is to rectify our body and achieve an optimal state of health.

During zazen, attaining a state in which one no longer feels the body is called sitting in forgetfulness. Free from restraint of physical sensations, only then can one enter various levels of dhyana in the consciousness realm.

So, how do you reach an optimal state of physical health? By sitting in meditation in the Full Lotus Position!

What are the conditions that must be met?

First: Diet. People who eat meat can practice meditation, but they cannot enter dhyana. Even if they do, it will only be temporary. They cannot stay in it long enough and certainly cannot achieve enlightenment. Therefore, if you have not quit eating meat, at least stop from now on. If you must eat meat, you are sure allowed to practice meditation, but you cannot presume to attain any specific state of consciousness.

Second: Surroundings. Find a quiet, clean space, sit on a meditation cushion. Loud noise disrupts beginners a great deal, messiness also affects one's mood. Therefore, keep your meditation room clean and

uncluttered, ideally with as little furniture as possible. If no such space is available, meditate on your bed. You are good as long as you do not mind your surroundings.

Third: Timing. The best time to sit in meditation is early in the morning! After waking up, your stomach is growling, and your body is still in a half-asleep state, not yet fully alert.

The first step in meditation is to relax your body! At that early hour, your body is likely rather relaxed, making it easier to enter a meditative state. If you sit in meditation during the day, it's best to wait at least two hours after a meal, making sure any food is fully digested beforehand. Otherwise, the food blocks the meridians and collaterals, and your legs will ache faster and more severely during meditation than usual.

Now about age. Someone asks whether there is an age limit for sitting in meditation. There is not! However, older people may face stiff joints and less flexibility, making it hard to achieve the Full Lotus Position. If you are determined and can persevere, that is ideal; if not, there is no way to force it. Some elderly people even find it difficult to sit on the ground and can only meditate on a chair. We do not push anyone and it is all based on your own awareness and effort. Consider one of the Buddha's disciples, who meditated for seven days and nights without sleeping, eventually losing his sight, yet still attaining liberation in the end. If you have such determination, you can give it a try; otherwise leave it for now. After all, there is always the next lifetime; you do not have to reach a specific level within this lifetime.

How should you position yourself? First, place your right foot on the root of your left leg, then place your left foot on the root of your right leg. Bring your feet inward as much as possible, which is called the Subduing-Demon Posture. The body is an obstacle to us, we must first subdue it in practice. When we need our body to be still, it should become still; when we need it to move, it should move; while also remaining healthy.

Your hands should form the Samadhi Mudra. Place the four fingers of your right hand over the four fingers of your left hand, with both thumbs lightly touching at the tip, and let your hands rest naturally in front of your lower abdomen.

Do not lean forward or hunch over. Your back should be straight but not stiff to the point of discomfort. Avoid stretching upward forcibly as if trying to pull a scallion. Relax and find the position where you breathe most naturally and smoothly.

Tilt your head slightly forward! Tilting it too high or too low will put pressure on your trachea, making it hard to breathe. Stop at the position where you feel the easiest and most comfortable to breathe.

Your gaze should rest about 1.5 meters ahead of you, with your eyes half-open. Not fully open, nor completely closed. Keeping your eyes closed tends to invite many delusions. Thus, for beginners, it's recommended to keep them half-open. However, do not fix your focus; just let your eyes gaze blankly. Once you practice sitting in meditation to the point where your delusions significantly diminish, you can then close your eyes.

Keep your mouth closed! If your mouth remains open during zazen, you might drool after a while, and you will leak Qi, so keep your mouth closed.

Your teeth should lightly touch each other. Do not bite hard. Clenching your teeth over time leads to gum inflammation and teeth loosening. Also, your teeth should not remain completely separated. Your teeth not touching at all weakens the lower jaw over time, increases the gap between upper and lower jaws, and overstimulates salivary glands, causing excessive saliva secretion.

Place your tongue against the palate, but do not forcefully curl it inward. Just let it gently touch the palate.

The human body has self-healing capabilities. When injured, it will naturally repair itself. Especially during nighttime sleep, the speed of healing is faster than that during the day. This is because there are fewer delusions while sleeping.

In this Full Lotus Position, the body's self-healing capability intensifies to several times compared to that during sleep. You do not need to consciously control it, just maintain this position, and your body will automatically adjust and recover.

So, how long should you sit in meditation?

At least one hour! Compared to the first 55 minutes, the body's recovery speed is more rapid in the last 5 minutes, yielding greater effects. Therefore, try your best to stick it out for a full hour. If it is too hard, then build up gradually. You should still start with 30 minutes, and add 5 minutes after a week; add another 5 minutes after another week. Continue adding incrementally, and you must ultimately reach at least one hour.

How to determine whether your meridians and collaterals have been unblocked? You must be able to sit for two hours without pain, which is the benchmark!

To adapt to sitting in meditation quickly, I recommend prostration. Sometimes during meditation, your body might sway back and forth on its own or twitch suddenly as if startled, which is caused by your strong habits of restlessness. The solution is still prostration. Using prostration to eliminate the restless habits. Do 500 prostrations a day. Once you become proficient, it will only take about an hour. After six months, the swaying and jerking during sitting in meditation should naturally subside.

Once the posture is correct, focus on your breathing!

When you first sit in meditation, begin with deep breathing and inhale deeply. As you inhale, your abdomen should expand outward. Some people may find their abdomens retract as they inhale, and their chests puff up while their shoulders lift, which means that you are breathing only with your chest.

We need to practice diaphragmatic breathing! How do you train this?

Pay no attention to inhaling. Instead, focus on controlling your abdomen. As your abdomen expands outward, air will naturally flow in. At the beginning, you need to practice this by expanding your abdomen to draw in air. Then, let the air naturally flow out. Leave no pause between inhaling and exhaling. Pausing between inhaling and exhaling negatively affects beginners, especially those with cardiovascular issues. The pausing may potentially cause heart palpitations or irregular rhythms, leading to serious consequences. Therefore, beginners should avoid experimenting with special techniques! Simply focus on expanding your

abdomen forcefully to inhale, then allow the air to naturally exhale by itself. Do not force it out quickly, nor should you deliberately slow it down. Just let the air flow out naturally. With 20 minutes of deep breathing like this, your emotions will begin to stabilize, after which you can transition into natural breathing.

We have discussed posture and breathing, the only topic left is mind!

During deep breathing, you are essentially observing your breath! But when you switch to natural breathing, what should you do then?

For beginners, I recommend chanting the Great Compassion Mantra! Any mantra will work, but the Great Compassion Mantra is the most widely practiced and easiest to obtain. Once memorized, it takes about 30 seconds to recite. Move your mouth without making a sound. Your vocal cords should not vibrate, just silently chant the mantra. Pay no attention to delusions! Sync your breathing with the mantra. Once your delusions subside to some extent, recite inwardly with lips sealed.

Alternatively, you can skip chanting mantra entirely and focus solely on observing breathing. If you are overwhelmed with delusions and not able to concentrate, then chant the mantra!

In summary, persistence leads to success—commit to sitting in meditation for one hour! Every morning, wake up early to sit in meditation for an hour before starting your day. In the evening, skip an hour of television, and sit in meditation for an hour before bed. For beginners, sitting in meditation before bed can improve your sleep quality. For experienced practitioners, meditating will make you feel increasingly energized, which might make it harder to fall asleep. Therefore, meditating before bed is recommended only for beginners.

It will take several more articles to fully explain dhyana! If you have questions about actual practicing, feel free to ask, but more details will be gradually released in the future.

As far as theory goes, I have already explained earlier how a Buddha falls into an ordinary being—all the details are there.

What I want to explain is how to retrace the route step by step! This is not about looking down from Buddhahood and analyzing how consciousness and mind work.

Let’s continue with dhyana. The Subduing-Demon Posture mentioned earlier is used to unblock the right side of the body, including the stomach and liver! Our bodies are formed from the food we consume, so the first task is to restore the digestive and detoxification systems. This way, whatever you eat will be digested properly. Of course, excluding foods you should not eat.

Here, let’s first indicate the foods that have negative impacts on meditation.

First, abstain from meat! Prohibit milk, yogurt, cheese, high-dairy ice cream, soy milk, etc. These foods contain rich protein, which cannot be thoroughly decomposed by the kidneys. After eating them, if you sit in meditation, you will find your lower back increasingly painful, and your Qi flow will be blocked. Therefore, stick to rice, noodles, vegetables, and fruits. Try to eat light food and avoid thick oils, too much of which are not beneficial!

If you plan to go on a meditation retreat, sitting in meditation all day, then you should avoid rice and noodles altogether, stick solely to vegetables and fruits, which is called Bigu. The bloating sensation caused by rice and noodles, along with the excess heat generated during digestion, will negatively impact your meditation.

Once you have unblocked the right side of your body and can sit for over two hours without your left leg feeling sore or numb, then it is time to switch legs. This time, place your left foot on the root of your right thigh first, then put your right foot on top of your left thigh, which is known as the Lotus Position. If you observe statues of the Buddha, they are all depicted in the Lotus Position. The Buddha practiced for three Asamkhya Kalpas, ultimately achieving unsurpassed and equal enlightenment. Most of his karmic obstacles have been eliminated, thus allowing him to naturally adopt the Lotus Position.

This posture facilitates unblocking the internal organs on the left side of your body, and the benchmark remains the same. You should be able to sit for two hours without any discomfort. However, since you have already unblocked the right side, unblocking the left side will likely be easier.

After using the Subduing-Demon Posture and the Lotus Position to unblock both sides of the body, the body will naturally begin to channel energy through the central meridian. Never observe Qi! Buddhist practice strictly avoids discussing or observing Qi, and those who do so are bound to encounter misfortune—your thoughts may direct the Qi to improper areas. Therefore, keep your focus on observing the breath, reciting Buddha's names, or Zen practicing on Huatou.

Now, let me describe the sensations you might experience when your body begins to channel energy through the central meridian. However, do not actively seek out these sensations—this is only to let you know what the proper sensations would be like if they do happen.

At first, you may feel a cooling sensation near your lower back and kidneys, though someone may experience heat, which depends on the cold or heat predisposition of individual body constitutions. Then, a warm current will flow outward and converge in the middle. This current will climb up along your spine, which contains many acupoints. Wherever there is a blockage, the flow will pause there, typically causing significant pain which you need to endure. The energy will open up one acupoint after another until it reaches the Baihui acupoint at the top of your head. From there, it starts flowing downward, tracing the Du Meridian, which is Yang in nature, until it reaches the Renzhong acupoint. From the Renzhong, it continues downward, opening up the Danzhong acupoint and entering the Dantian before finally opening up the Huiyin acupoint. From the Renzhong to the Huiyin is the Ren Meridian and Yin in nature. From the Huiyin acupoint, the flow loops back to the starting point between your kidneys. Completing this full circulation means that the Ren and Du Meridians have been successfully unblocked.

As you have already unblocked both side meridians and collaterals of the body earlier, one connects to both hands, forming a circulation loop, while another connects to both feet, forming a second loop. These three loops would intersect at the Baihui acupoint at the top of your head. When the three flows of Qi converge at the top of your head, this is called the Triple Qi Returning to the Origin. At this point, you will suddenly feel an extraordinary clarity of mind and enter dhyana. In this state, you will sit in forgetfulness,

completely forgetting the existence of your body. Once you have reached this state, you will have officially entered the Dhyana in the Desire Realm, which is the first stage of dhyana.

The key is never to observe Qi, and even more importantly, never to use your intention to control it!

I have seen many people practicing qigong or yoga alongside meditation! Without fully unblocking their internal meridians and collaterals, they first managed to unblock external acupoints. The human body has several large and significant acupoints that connect internally to the outside world, including the Baihui acupoint at the top of the head, the Huiyin acupoint below, both palms, both soles of the feet, the Danzhong acupoint in the front, and several acupoints along the back. Once these acupoints are opened up, your body begins to leak Qi! Whenever you come into contact with others, your healthy Qi flows into their bodies, while their unclean Qi flows into yours. The more Qi you leak, the more drained you become, lethargic and fatigued. If you reach this stage, trying to refine Qi into elixir or seal the acupoints becomes exceedingly difficult. Remember this well!

Moreover, before entering the Dhyana in the Desire Realm, the mind dharma is not important. Whatever you chant or observe does not matter, because after sitting for half an hour or an hour, your legs or your entire body will start to ache. Your attention will be entirely distracted by the pain, and you will be simply struggling against the sensation.

Thus, regardless of the methods, the first step is to unblock all the meridians and collaterals of the whole body!

Chapter 3: From Dhyana in the Desire Realm to the Fourth Dhyana

Writing posts is time consuming! Currently not many people follow this forum, I have considered setting up another Dharma practice site on a different platform. However, putting together this post alone exhausted all my free time. So I've decided to focus solely on this thread and will not start more forums—hope everyone who comes across benefits!

Many online users indulge only in empty talks about Dharma doctrines, occasionally they drop by to "test" me—I really have no time to spare on debating with these boring individuals! Spreading Dharma online is completely different from holding a Dharma assembly in a temple. In a temple, a senior monk lectures on stage with authority, responding to occasional questions however they see fit—no one talks nonsense.

Now let's cut to the chase—how to ascend step by step from Dhyana in the Desire Realm to more advanced dhyana!

Once I was prostrating fervently in a Buddha Hall, a layperson came in. He appeared disdainful of my intense prostrations and asked me, "What is Tathāgatagarbha?"

The malice in his eyes clearly indicated him being a meat eater. I answered, "Lay practitioner, you haven't even abstained from eating meat, yet you're here discussing the Tathāgatagarbha—those are topics suitable for Buddhas! Have some pity on animals and eat less meat!"

So he questioned how I knew he was a meat eater.

I replied, "Look at those two dogs outside： From the moment you walked in, they've been barking at you and don't dare to approach. Your murderous aura is so intense that even the courtyard guard dogs—are scared off—and you still say you don't eat much meat? "

He kidded around and replied, "Wine and meat pass through the belly, yet the Buddha abides in the heart."

I responded, "Your heart is packed with grease from all those meats, no spot for the Buddha to set foot, abides in your heart?"

He snorted and walked out. A fellow practitioner who was prostrating next to me commented that I was being too harsh.

Folks like this guy can spend their lifetime visiting temples but still have zero chance of rebirth in the Pure Land!

Many people mistake studying Buddhism as learning from the Buddha. Buddhism is a philosophy, while learning from the Buddha involves learning from his life experiences—his renunciation, asceticism,

enlightenment, and dissemination of Dharma—carry on his will to practice and teach the Dharma. Among these aspects of the Buddha's life, which ones can you truly follow?

One's accomplishments are exhibited through his/her funeral. When the Buddha passed away, eight kings contended for his relics. Relics are ashes! They were not able to come to agreement, so they divided the relics into eight portions, each king taking back one portion to enshrine in their country. Now look at yourself—how many people will attend your funeral? Would anyone fight over your remains?

Occasionally I wonder, how many people will shed tears when I die? I hope that when it's my time, the president of the nation will deliver a eulogy, and I'll be given a state funeral—not hoping for the nation flying flags at half-mast. I don't know if this wish will come true. Right now, I am still young, and need more wisdom to venture out to spread the Dharma. I'm sure I will begin the journey one day!

Bodhisattvas live in this world like torches, burn themselves to enlighten sentient beings, to their last gasp.

Section 01: Sitting in Forgetfulness

Upon entering the Dhyana in the Desire Realm, you must quickly rise from the serene bliss state of self-forgetfulness. The state of self-forgetfulness is known as unaware emptiness. Once you fall into unaware emptiness, not even the appearance of all Buddhas of the three times—past, present and future—can liberate you. No matter how long you meditate, you'll make no progress—this is an obstacle to Dhyana in the Desire Realm Meditation.

I also experienced this state before! Sitting for hours would feel like minutes, only to rise with no memory—neither fully dreaming nor fully awake. I mistook it for an advanced realm, but my master saw through it. He identified this state as unaware emptiness, stressing that meditation requires awareness. You must maintain consciousness of your meditation, fully perceiving and clearly recognizing all sensations arising through the five sense faculties.

My master then handed me a wooden fish and instructed me to meditate in the side hall, simultaneously chanting Buddha's name while rhythmically striking the wooden fish. Yet, within half an hour, I fell back into the state of self-forgetfulness. This state was not like sleep, in which the body typically relaxes and collapses. Instead, I sat perfectly upright, one hand gripping the wooden fish and the other holding the stick, my head held straight, neither drooping nor tilting, utterly motionless like a statue.

My master woke me up and asked about my sensations; I replied that I felt nothing. When I checked the time, I realized two full hours had elapsed. He instructed me to cease meditating in the main hall and henceforth practice in the side hall, striking the wooden fish during three-hour sessions each morning and afternoon. He summoned all temple members to announce my designated hours for practice. He mandated that whenever the wooden fish's rhythm ceased, someone must immediately rouse me to resume the practice.

Initially, I frequently slipped into the state of self-forgetfulness, and was woken up by others repeatedly. After two weeks, I ceased experiencing the state of self-forgetfulness. I would sit for three-hour

sessions, chanting the Buddha's name while striking the wooden fish, maintaining crystal-clear awareness throughout. However, I observed the wooden fish strikes gradually quickening, as did the pace of my chanting. This revealed my practice was still immature—an undercurrent of anxiety was arising, though imperceptible to my conscious awareness.

After another two weeks, I could strike the wooden fish at an even pace for three hours, mindfully chanting Buddha's name without delusion arising. Time passed quickly, but I remained fully aware of my actions.

Afterward, I took the wooden fish and walked outside the temple gate, circumambulating the wall. Walking while striking the wooden fish and reciting the Buddha's name. I was fully aware that I was observing, aware of the chanting from my mouth, of my hand striking the wooden fish, of my ears hearing the Buddha name and wooden fish sound, and of my feet navigating my walking path. I even consciously maneuvered around obstacles along the way. After two weeks of this circumambulatory practice, I attained a level of awakening sufficient to resume sitting in meditation.

I am profoundly grateful to my master—encountering a true spiritual guide is an immense merits. Learning from unworthy teachers not only deprives one of true knowledge but also squanders precious time and dissipates vital energy.

Practice is not attained merely through reciting sutras. Without true understanding, indiscriminately sharing sutras can ultimately harm both oneself and others.

Previously, when I talked about abstaining from sexual desire and refining Qi to Elixir, some people accused me of blindly practicing differentiation and still being destined for samsara after death. Others claimed that even after abstaining from sexual desire, nocturnal emissions would persist. To those who comment without having attained genuine accomplishment in their own practice: refrain from judgment. As Confucius himself said, regarding what you do not know—remain silent. At the very least, that avoids creating verbal karma.

If I were to drop my pants, everyone would be astonished: under normal circumstances, my penis is only 1cm, with nothing but foreskin visible. I am a healthy adult. I eat one meal a day while performing 864 full prostrations and worshiping the Buddha for three hours. I am certainly not overweight. So how did my penis become like this? It came through practicing. I did not deliberately practice Qi but simply followed standard practices. Over time, through consistent practice, this transformation occurred. As my practice deepened, the suction power of my Inner Elixir intensified, causing my male genital organ to retract internally. When I direct my internal Qi downward, it swells to average size. The drawing force of the inner elixir could permeate beyond my physical form, beginning to draw in Qi from the external environment. When traveling for no more than three days, I can consume no food, only water, and restore my vitality through meditation during the night.

Among the Buddha's Thirty-Two Marks, there exists the "Well-Retracted Male Organ"! Do you imagine the Buddha would feel no shame, flaunting such a matter? If it were congenital, it would be an inborn defect, which he would have been too embarrassed to even mention. Yet the historical records

clearly documented his marriage and offspring! Whether innate or attained through practice, this mark is by no means trivial.

The sutras conceal profound esoteric meanings! If you truly practice according to the Dharma and reach a higher level, the sutras reveal ever-deeper dimensions of meaning upon each reading. If you haven't even managed to eradicate sexual desire, how can you criticize others for blindly practicing differentiation? Such presumption reveals your lack of proper foundation.

I have consistently stressed: practice is not about flapping one's lips; it demands honest and diligent practice, step by step, overcoming one obstacle at a time.

I'm no guerrilla fighter who has fired a couple of rounds from a hunting rifle and comes here pretending to be a war hero. I'm a regular army, elite special forces—I have endured rigorous training and passed severe tests to attain this stage.

An account of Venerable Master Xu Yun's life also documents an event. During his ascetic practice in the mountains, a visitor came to discourse on Dharma with him. The person spoke exaggeratedly. Finally, Master Xu Yun said, "Your words are all empty talk. How about we compete in meditation? Let's see who can sit longer." Xu Yun sat in meditation for seven full days, whereas the visitor failed to sustain even half a day. When Xu Yun came out of dhyana, the visitor asked how he had achieved it. Xu Yun replied that "By contemplating great questioning and clinging steadfastly to the emotion of great questioning." This is a real skill forged through genuine practice.

If someone truly debates Dharma with me face-to-face, I would emulate Xu Yun's example—dispensing with empty talk to see who can last longer in meditation. If sitting in meditation proves too difficult for you, we may shift to a test of movement. Comparing prostrations is also available—I can perform 3,000 full prostrations like a machine, breath steady and complexion unchanged. Let's see how many you can complete.

Originally, I was discussing Zen practice in the Buddhist forum! They banned me, citing some statement like "real Buddhists are not Zen practitioners"—supposedly a lama's words, though I can't recall exactly. Therefore, I moved to this forum, but found most members are engaged in mere speculation, prompting my lament. Of course, those who are genuinely practicing don't have leisure for online posting!

In any case, our karmic connection brings you to my writings—some with sincere devotion to learning Dharma, others intent on nitpicking and fault-finding. You may share your opinions and I won't delete them, but debates should be avoided. Endless arguments convince no one and only breed vexation.

Rather than debate, devote time to sincere Buddha recitation and Zazen. If that doesn't work for you, then enjoy Guo Degang's comedy—it guarantees cheerful sleep, surpassing fruitless arguments.

This piece offers little substance, though the process of transcending the state of self-forgetfulness might prove helpful. My apologies for taking up your time with my complaints.

Section 02: Methods of Practice

Chapter 2 addressed Dhyana in the Desire Realm—unblocking the Ren and Du Meridians, attaining the Three Qi Returning to the Origin, and entering the realm of sitting in forgetfulness. Here, one truly enters a new world of consciousness.

Only after entering Dhyana in the Desire Realm can one properly apply various Zen practice methods for targeted practice, achieving breakthroughs step by step. During sitting in meditation, remember to alternate your leg position regularly to ensure unimpeded Qi flow.

Now, let's dive into the main topic!

Once again, the guiding principle of my "Hundred Flowers Erratic Art" is to cater to modern practitioners realistically without empty talk. No quotation direct from the sutras and no obscure jargon. Anyone with a clear and logical mind will surely understand.

1. The Targets to Eliminate During Meditation

Before discussing methods of practice, we must first meticulously analyze our consciousness.

"How can a sovereign defeat his enemies if he does not even know where they are?" How can he possibly launch an attack?

If someone asks you what Buddhism is, your answer should be: "All phenomena are created by consciousness."

Then, what is consciousness? You say: "It is delusion, discrimination, and attachment." Such an answer reveals genuine understanding of Buddhism.

Consciousness can be divided into three layers: delusion, discrimination and attachment, like the concentric layers of an onion. Detailed analysis shows: the innermost comprises eleven types of delusion of Bodhisattvas; the middle layer contains nine types of discriminating mind of Arhats; the outermost includes innumerable attachments of ordinary beings.

We will not elaborate on Bodhisattva's delusions nor Arhat's discriminating minds, but instead focus on a detailed analysis of the attachments of ordinary beings.

First, the attachment to delusions themselves, corresponding to the Heaven of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception.

Second, the attachment to the concept of nothingness, corresponding to the Heaven of Nothingness.

Third, the attachment to one's own consciousness, corresponding to the Heaven of Infinite Consciousness.

Fourth, the attachment to space, corresponding to the Heaven of Infinite Space.

These are the Four Heavens of the Formless Realm!

Next, let's analyze in detail the Eighteen Heavens of the Realm of Form.

In my previous explanation of the Three Realms, I proceeded from the Heaven of Infinite Space directly to “name and form”, where eyes and external objects appear. However, the crucial intermediate stage is this: following the attachment to space, emotion arises.

This emotion lacks concrete content, just like the attachment to delusions themselves, and it is the attachment to the emotion itself. At this point, consciousness covering space begins to condense into a mass. The attachment to emotion itself corresponds to the Five Pure-Dwelling Heavens at the top of the Nine Heavens of the Fourth Dhyana. With each subsequent layer, the density of this condensed consciousness becomes tighter, from top to bottom.

Within the attachment to emotion itself, the first emotion with content that emerges is the joyful emotion, also called the emotion of joy, corresponding to the four heavens beneath the Five Pure-Dwelling Heavens in the Fourth Dhyana.

Joy gives rise to suffering; next emerge various painful emotions—collectively termed emotions of suffering. Any emotion other than joyful emotion falls within suffering emotions: unease, melancholy, sadness, distress, fear, anger, jealousy, etc.—all these constitute suffering. Here, unease first arises, displacing joy, and a subtle sense of unease begins. This emotion of suffering corresponds to the Three Heavens of the Third Dhyana.

The emotions of suffering and joy give rise to “name and form”, marking the emergence of the realms of five sense faculties.

The first to manifest is the realm of the eye faculty. Externally there are visible objects, intermediately the eye faculty, and internally eye consciousness—collectively termed eye dust, eye faculty, and eye consciousness. Subsequently emerges the body faculty realm, followed by the ear faculty realm. These three faculty realms correspond to the Three Heavens of the Second Dhyana.

Next, the realms of the nose faculty and tongue faculty arise. These two faculty realms correspond to the Three Heavens of the First Dhyana.

Then emerges sexual desire—corresponding to the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm!

We won’t delve into the Four Heavens of the Formless Realm but will instead focus on the attachments and sexual desire corresponding to the Eighteen Heavens of the Realm of Form. From the innermost to the outer layers, they are: emotions without specific content, the emotion of joy, the emotion of suffering, the three consciousnesses of eye, body, and ear; the two consciousnesses of nose and tongue; and sexual desire—these are precisely what we ordinary beings must eliminate during meditation!

In the Dhyana of the Desire Realm, you must eliminate sexual desire!

In the First Dhyana, you must eliminate the realms of the nose and tongue faculties!

In the Second Dhyana, you must eliminate the realms of the eye, body, and ear faculties!

In the Third Dhyana, you must eliminate all emotions of suffering!

The Fourth Dhyana is divided into two levels: at the lower level, the emotion of joy is eliminated; at the upper level, contentless emotions are eliminated. When emotions are completely extinguished, the

condensed consciousness dissolves entirely and pervades all space, entering the meditative state of the Dhyana of the Infinite Space.

Dear readers, please be patient—this post will guide you through the complete process from beginning to end!

Buddhism is a complete system. If you don't grasp its theory clearly, you cannot attain right knowledge and right views! Practice without right views as its theoretical basis, it essentially leads to a dead end.

The emotions of suffering and joy give rise to the realms of the five faculties, and the Attachment to the Six Consciousnesses corresponding to these realms manifests as attention and verbal thought.

The realms of the five faculties are unchangeable for ordinary beings! For example, when you see a beautiful woman, she exists externally as visible objects—you cannot alter this reality, which is immutable. The eye faculty perceives her, which is unchangeable. You might close your eyes to avoid seeing her, but even then, you are still seeing darkness. Even if you remove your eyeballs, darkness remains—this is called the imperishable nature of seeing. When the woman's image is reflected in consciousness, it becomes eye consciousness, which is also unchangeable. By this reasoning, all realms of the five sense faculties are fundamentally unchangeable!

When eye consciousness functions in coordination with the sixth consciousness, the subsequent emotions—attention and verbal thought—become active and start functioning:

First, there is an emotional fluctuation—you experience joyful emotions.

Immediately, attention arises. You become fixated on gazing at the beautiful woman.

When verbal thought arises, you think, "How beautiful! I must find a way to start a conversation. What should I say?"

Finally, your body and mouth begin to act accordingly.

Reorganizing consciousness in this way: innermost are contentless emotions→ emotion of joy →emotion of suffering→ attention → verbal thought. We work precisely with these in our practice!

In the Shurangama Sutra, the Chapter on the Twenty-Five Sages to Perfect Penetration includes methods of practice through five sense faculties. However, these methods treat the five faculties merely as objects for focused observation and panoramic awareness not as something to be modified or controlled.

Now we shall discuss the methods of practice—specifically four approaches: the Method of Enlightenment through the Ear-Faculty by Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, the Tiantai School's Śamatha-vipaśyanā, Huatou Zen, and Buddha Recitation Samadhi.

2. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's Method of Enlightenment through the Ear-Faculty

The original text is as follows:

Turning the direction of my hearing inward, I entered the flow of the enlightened nature of hearing and forgot the object of hearing. Once the state attained through inward hearing becomes serene, both

dynamic and static phenomena-sounds and silence-ceased to arise. Progressing gradually in this way, the subjective ability to hear and the objective sounds disappeared. If I was not attached to the transcendence of the enlightened nature of hearing, awareness and its objects became empty. When the process of emptying my awareness was wholly complete, then even that emptying and what had been emptied vanished. At last, the very nature of birth and death ceased to exist. Then, the ultimate stillness—Nirvana—was revealed in its true form.

This single statement fully outlines the stages of practice, which is the only one among the four methods I will teach that theoretically leads directly to nirvana. However, as I've mentioned earlier, during the Dharma-Ending Age, ordinary beings typically only reach the lower stage of the Fourth Dhyana, breakthroughs beyond this are extremely difficult! Thus, don't expect this method to lead you to Buddhahood in one lifetime—advance as far as you can, wherever your practice takes you!

I'll bypass textual explanations and directly address the experiential aspects - what you may feel and how to practice this method.

Let's assume you've already entered the realms of sitting in forgetfulness and successfully emerged from the blissful of self-forgetfulness. First, you need to find a tranquil space to meditate. It is ideal to use soothing and serene music designed for meditation. Refrain from playing rock, pop, or anything that increases agitation. Avoid listening to music you particularly enjoy either, as it may excite you and make it difficult to settle into the practice.

Focus your attention on listening. Though ambient sounds exist, disregard them and attend exclusively to the music. After sustained listening, you'll perceive this attention as burdensome, naturally seeking its release. At this moment, attention begins inner contemplation, where you may start to hear sounds from inside your body—this marks "external sensation ceases, inner sensation arises". You might hear your heartbeat, the sound of blood flowing, the gurgling of your intestines, and the rising and falling of air in your trachea. Direct your attention to these internal sounds.

At the next stage, even the sounds from the internal body vanish, leaving a pure silence, which is called "inner sensation ceases, silence arises." Silence is also a sound! Both movement and silence are phenomena that enter through the ear faculty in the form of auditory objects. Persist in attending to this silence.

At the next level, even silence disappears. You become aware of your hearing ability itself, which is the ear faculty and the nature of hearing. When you can observe this hearing nature, you enter the First Dhyana! Initial sexual desire dissipates, though it may resurface during meditation, causing you to come out of dhyana. Simply rest and try again later, or resume the practice the next day.

In summary, you use your ears to listen, first to the absence of external sounds, then to the sounds within your body. When even the internal sounds disappear and pure silence arises, you keep going until silence itself dissolves. Then, you begin to observe the nature of hearing. Focus solely on your ear faculty through this process. The nose and tongue faculties require no attention—they will spontaneously

extinguish. You are practicing through the ear faculty! Everything from earlier stages will spontaneously extinguish as your practice advances.

Then, through which means do you observe the nature of hearing?

You utilize the seventh consciousness, the mind of discrimination, to observe it! After completing the practice with the ear faculty, awareness directly shifts to the discriminating mind. The eye faculty, the emotions of suffering and joy, and even contentless emotion are all bypassed. This marks your entrance into the Second Dhyana. During this stage, various uneasy emotions may arise and cause you to exit the meditative state, but you must continue practicing forward.

When you observe the hearing nature until it extinguishes, you then shift your focus to the eye faculty, linked to the illusory phenomena of light and darkness. By this point, you will have grasped the key principle! The six sense faculties are like knots tied in a thread. Once you untie one knot, the others follow effortlessly. With the extinguishment of the eye faculty, you proceed to observe emotions, which brings you to the Third Dhyana. Reaching this stage is already quite remarkable!

Beyond this stage, I can only convey scriptural explanations and can’t breakdown subtly, as I haven't attained these states myself, any description would be empty speculation. Just take a listen for what it’s worth.

Theoretically, when the five sense faculties are completely dissolved, faulty ceases, awareness arises - this awareness is the discriminating mind. Your consciousness can now perceive the functioning of the discriminating mind. Now employ the discriminating mind to observe the emotions of suffering and joy.

When both the emotions are extinguished, ascend further and observe using delusion. Apply the Bodhisattva’s delusion to observe the Arhat’s discriminating mind, persisting until awareness ceases and delusion cognition arises. When the discriminating mind vanishes, you become aware of the rising and cessation of delusion.

Ascending further, observe the Bodhisattva's delusion through the Buddha's intrinsic nature, persisting until complete cessation of delusion, which is termed as “delusions cease, Nirvana arises”.

The reorganized sequence is as follows: external sensation ceases → internal sensation arises → internal sensation ceases → silence arises → silence ceases, faculty arises → faculty ceases and awareness arises → awareness ceases, delusion cognition arises → delusion ceases, Nirvana arises → attaining Buddhahood.

The theory of practice always follows this principle: using subsequent stage to observe and transcend the preceding one, ascending step by step. Practitioners confident in their practice level may directly engage in advanced stages.

3. The Tiantai school’s Samatha and Vipassana

Next, let’s discuss the Tiantai school’s Samatha and Vipassana (Calm Abiding and Insight).

If you were to read the text “Tiantai Samatha-Vipassana”, it could take you a month! However, even after reading it, you might not fully grasp how to practice or where to begin.

Samatha here refers to the attachment to the six consciousnesses—including the most external verbal thought to innermost emotions without content, as well as the four types of attachments in the Heavens of the Formless Realm. Vipassana entails using the seventh consciousness, the discriminating mind, to observe the preceding six consciousnesses.

The theory is as follows: if we pay attention to our consciousness while sitting quietly, we can discover that the part creating verbal thought is one consciousness, while there is another consciousness behind observing the first one that engages in verbal thought. These two are distinct consciousnesses. The first represents attachment, while the second, perceiving the creation of the verbal thought, is the mind of discrimination.

The Tiantai School's Method of Samatha and Vipassana directly employs the discriminating mind to observe all preceding attachments. Theoretically, this method can lead to attaining Arhat stage—eliminating all attachments. Yet, as I mentioned before, sentient beings in the Dharma-Ending Age can at most reach the Fourth Dhyana. Therefore, using this method is also about progressing as far as possible without expecting to become an Arhat—transcending birth and death, or transcending from samsara, all in one lifetime.

So, how exactly should one practice this method?

Let’s assume you have already achieved Dhyana in the Desire Realm and emerged from the blissful state of self-forgetfulness. First, enter into dhyana, then begin the observation. Use the seventh consciousness to observe all attachments and simultaneously observe all sensations entering through the five sense faculties.

At this stage, verbal thought usually subsides. However, they are not entirely extinguished, they simply do not arise temporarily when you just enter into dhyana. Attention similarly subsides, these two most troublesome aspects are temporarily subdued, as does sexual desire.

You must observe the sensations of the five faculties: the field of vision is completely dark, the ears can perceive external sounds, the body can feel hot or cold, the skin senses friction with clothing, the nose is engaged in breathing and may detect certain odors (and you must consciously perceive these odors), and the tongue in contact with the palate can also be felt—you must observe all of these sensations simultaneously!

After some time, attention may begin to shift or fluctuate. You must observe how attention functions and how verbal thought arises—all these must be observed and recognized simultaneously in differentiation.

This requires practice, and ordinary people generally cannot do it initially! Therefore, we observe one faculty at a time instead of all five sense faculties. For the Samatha and Vipassana method, the chosen focus is the body faculty.

When you observe the darkness in front of you, you will soon start to feel agitated because this darkness does not change. For beginners, it is very challenging to maintain focus on something unchanging for a long time.

When observing sounds, the sound must be continuous and calm—this you can observe, and it becomes the Method of Enlightenment Through Ear Faculty. However, there aren't always such ideal sounds in your environment. Sometimes, it's the sound of the wind, sometimes bird chirping, sometimes the rustling of leaves, and sometimes footsteps. Such ever-changing, irregular sounds cannot be observed—why? Because observation initially requires employing attention, which is itself an attachment. If you play calm and soothing music, your attention can focus on it. But without a fixed object, attention keeps shifting: one moment to the wind, the next to the birds. This constant shifting makes it impossible for attention to cease and for you to observe through the mind of discrimination. Thus, the Samatha and Vipassana method chooses the body as the object to observe—and breathing is also part of the body.

Therefore, the entry-level method of the Tiantai Samatha and Vipassana practice is to visualize yourself sitting in Amitabha Buddha's radiance while observing nasal inhalation and exhalation. Observing nasal breathing is also a method among the Twenty-Five Sages' teachings on perfect penetration. When your breathing becomes extremely subtle and even attention itself feels burdensome, release the attention and begin to observe bodily sensations—this is where the practice truly begins! You should observe the sensations your skin conveys to you, sensations from your clothing's contact and any temperature changes. This awareness must remain continuous—if it breaks, that state is what we call "unaware emptiness," a state of complete unawareness. To maintain awareness, some practitioners choose to meditate in places slightly cold—cold enough to feel it but not to cause shivering. This mild coldness allows you to continuously observe the cold sensation entering your body. At the same time, you must also observe breathing, as it is part of the body and cannot be ignored.

While observing the body faculty, Karmic obstacles may arise: you may feel a burning sensation or full-body itching, like ants crawling across your skin. These are manifestations of hidden karmic obstacles within your consciousness. Do not be concerned—just continue observing. If the sensations become too intense, you may come out of dhyana.

A fellow practitioner in the meditation hall practiced this method. After meditating for several hours, he began scratching his face, claiming it felt as though insects were crawling on it. He scratched so intensely that his face became red. Unfortunately, there's no easy fix for this—you just have to endure it. The principle is similar to coming out of dhyana due to the onset of sexual desire.

The goal is to observe until the body stops transmitting any sensations to you. Once you reach this point, your practice will advance to the next level. Then you'll perceive the existence of the body faculty, which enables you to perceive external touch and temperature. This attainment signifies entry into the Second Dhyana. The body faculty ranks fourth among the five faculties, so you can ignore the tongue, nose, and ear faculties for now. Once you practice to the point where the body faculty is extinguished, you will naturally understand how to break through the eye faculty. The preceding three faculties will be extinguished as well.

When you enter the Third Dhyana, you still employ the discriminating mind to continue observing, specifically observing your emotions. The initial experience is one of tranquility. But over time, various emotions of suffering emerge: unease, anxiety, restlessness, worry, and fear. When emotions flare up

intensely, you may come out of dhyana. You continue observing until the emotions of suffering are extinguished, then a subtle, continuous, and delicate joy arises, which may last for extended periods: one day, two days, three days, four days, or even longer. At this stage, you enter the Fourth Dhyana. Moreover, the process of enlightenment occurs during this stage! This experience is very unique, and it will not pass by in a vague or unclear manner.

Beyond this stage, I cannot provide personal insights; I can only explain based on the texts. The path continues as follows: through meditation, the joyful feeling becomes progressively weaker and eventually disappears—this marks the upper level of the Fourth Dhyana. Continue observing until ego-attachment is extinguished, and consciousness dissolves to permeate all space—then you enter the Dhyana of Infinite Space. Continue observing this space until the space is extinguished, you progress to the Dhyana of Infinite Consciousness. Maintain this observation of consciousness until it vanishes, at which point you enter the Dhyana of Nothingness. Maintain your observation on the attachment to "nothingness" until it dissolves, leading you to enter the Dhyana of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception. Finally, observe the fundamental attachment to delusion in its utter emptiness. Once this last attachment is utterly extinguished, you attain the state of Arhat.

Doesn't this sound simple? It seems simple in theory, but in practice, it is far more challenging than the Zen Practice of Huatou!

4. The Zen Practice of Huatou (Contemplate Great Questioning)

The Zen Practice of Huatou in Chan (Zen) school became popular during the Song Dynasty—it is actually quite simple.

The most common huatou is the phrase: "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" But the key is not in this phrase; it lies in the sense of questioning, referred to as emotion of great questioning, which is an emotional state, which appears before the words "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" emerge in your mind—this is the key point. For example, when someone knocks on your door, your first reaction is questioning, followed by the words, "Who is it?"

The Zen Practice of Huatou requires you to cling to this emotion of great questioning, which is classified as an emotion of suffering. Why? When confronted with something unknown, a sense of questioning naturally arises; once you know the answer, you are overcome with joy. From this perspective, the emotion of great questioning is an emotion of suffering. In this sight, the Zen Practice of Huatou bypasses verbal thought and attention entirely, focusing directly on the emotion of suffering—hence, this method is simple.

From the moment you begin to meditate, focus on holding onto the emotion of great questioning—"Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" or "Who am I?" Treat this question as an emotion and cling to it without letting go. This practice does not mean repeatedly reciting these words like a mantra. Instead, it is about arousing and maintaining the emotion of great questioning. Not only must you hold onto the emotion of great questioning during meditation, but you must also carry it with you in daily life. Persistently cling to this emotional state—continuing even for 24 hours without interruption. In this way, your sexual desire will

be extinguished, and the realms of the five sense faculties will be extinguished one by one. When you can hold onto the emotion of great questioning and meditate for three days, four days, five days, or even longer, you will enter the Third Dhyana. When this emotion of great questioning is finally extinguished, you experience enlightenment—this is a process with clear stages. Afterward, you enter the Fourth Dhyana, a realm characterized only by joy.

The Zen Practice of Huatou ends at this point, with no further stages. However, compared to the two methods discussed earlier, this one is simpler and more practical—first practice up to this stage before moving on to other methods!

5. Buddha Recitation Samadhi (Contemplate Longing)

When I first began my practice, I started by reciting the Great Compassion Mantra. At my peak, I chanted it up to 800 times a day, and eventually, I even recited it in my dreams, which is called continuity in dreams. Less than a year into my practice, I had a dream of seeing Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin). Through a brief interaction with her, I gained some understanding of my origins and my destination after death. From that moment on, I had only one thought in my heart—to return—and thus I embarked on a long path of practice!

Later, I encountered several accomplished teachers and received significant help from them. Every time my practice encountered a bottleneck, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's empowerment enabled me to overcome the challenges. Even during the process of unblocking all the meridians in my body, the two major points beneath the scapulae remained blocked for a long time. Finally, in a dream, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva poured water from her willow branch vase and washed my back. Gradually, the blockages began to open.

After unblocking all the meridians in my body and entering Dhyana in the Desire Realm, I followed my master's guidance to successfully step out of the state of serene bliss known as the bliss of self-forgetfulness. Afterward, I began practicing the Huatou method of our school.

And this is where the problem began!

I practiced this method for two years, but by the third year, I felt as though something was missing. During meditation, I found it difficult to sense the emotion of great questioning for a long time. Initially, I could sustain it, but after two or three hours, the emotion of great questioning seemed to disappear. What followed was a sort of observation, but even that could not be called observation; it was more like idling. I remained fully aware of the fact that I was meditating, so it couldn't be classified as unaware emptiness; however, I found no focal point on which to apply my effort. Theoretically, this state of practice could lead to enlightenment, but at this stage of practice, one should not jump from method to method. If you're using the Zen practice of Huatou, you must follow it through until the Huatou breaks. By this point, sexual desire had been entirely suppressed within the emotional state. Coming out of dhyana is no longer due to sexual desire, but rather to a feeling of agitation.

I began to feel that sitting like this led nowhere, and my faith began to waver! Could it be that I still had unresolved karma? Was it necessary to go out and undergo hardships, endure suffering to eliminate karma, before I could advance further?

One day, while meditating in the Zen room, I found myself idling again. At that moment, a consciousness entered my mind (I'll omit the details of our communication here). Before leaving, this consciousness said a few words that felt like sweet dew poured over my head. I jumped up from my seat as if awakening from a dream, without paying attention to others, and ran straight to the sutra repository to search for the Surangama Sutra. Finding the section on Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva's Perfect Penetration through Buddha Recitation, the specific words "recall the Buddha, recite the Buddha" stood out. Yes! These words were exactly what I needed. Recall the Buddha! How foolish I was! I had always believed my destination after death would be the Pure Land, yet I had failed to practice the unique method of the Pure Land and instead wasted time pursuing this pointless emotion of great questioning. I knew who I was, and where I came from—what was there to question? How could I even give rise to great questioning? I was overjoyed, I finally found my way. From that moment on, I no longer contemplated great questioning, but turned to contemplating longing, which is yearning for Amitabha Buddha.

Both the emotion of great questioning and the emotion of longing are emotions of suffering, and both involve applying effort within the emotions of suffering, yet they differ. Modern people have varying spiritual capacities and varying emotional conditions.

The Zen practice of Huatou originated during the Song Dynasty, a time when people pursued the truth with utmost sincerity. Before the Song Dynasty, Huike cut off his arm to seek the Dharma, and Xuanzang made the long journey on foot to India to obtain the scriptures. Someone even broke their own bones to make pens and drew blood to use as ink for copying sutras. Their dedication to seeking the Way needs no words! By the Song Dynasty, burning one's own finger as an offering to the Buddha had become a common practice. With such intense resolve to seek the Way, one could easily arouse a strong emotion of great questioning—grasping it continuously for 24 hours without letting go!

But what about us? Do we have such intense resolve to seek the Way? No! However, we do have our own weapon—we have a strong mind of craving.

The reason Shakyamuni Buddha said the Pure Land Dharma is most suitable for sentient beings in the Dharma-Ending Age lies right here. Think about your distant mother, your first love, or someone you love—what kind of feeling is that? My sash is getting looser and looser; still I don't regret it: For her sake, it's worthwhile pining away! Such a mind of craving can be so powerful that it makes you lose appetite, cannot sleep through the night, and remains restless. For example, if the people you deeply love were injured, most people wouldn't hesitate to donate a bag of blood to help them. But, if a true spiritual guide asked you to draw a bag of blood to offer him in exchange for transmitting the Supreme Dharma, most people would refuse! Such is the modern person.

Our mind of craving far surpasses our resolve to seek the Way, so to contemplate longing is certainly more suitable for us than to contemplate great questioning. If we arouse this mind of craving, and fix its object upon Amitabha Buddha, everything will be perfectly accomplished.

I began contemplating longing, single-mindedly recollecting Amitabha Buddha. This does not mean repeatedly chanting the words “Amitabha Buddha” like a mantra. Instead, it is an emotional state, like the emotion of great questioning—both belong to the emotions of suffering, both being painful states of mind. At first, the emotions were so intense that I often came out of meditation with tears streaming down my face. But as time went on, this longing became subtle, and I held onto the faintest thread of it without letting go. I could meditate for over five hours straight, and this emotion of longing would continue even while eating, sleeping, and walking. This is the true Buddha Recitation Samadhi. It is not mechanically reciting the words, but to recollect Amitabha Buddha using an unwavering thread of longing emotion to extinguish all attachments.

My practice advanced by leaps and bounds! My sexual desire was extinguished, and I saw myself along with my fellow practitioners—at the forefront were Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva. I saw how we accepted Shakyamuni Buddha’s entrustment to enter this Saha World and begin a Dharma-transmission activity that would last for 3,000 years.

I saw the moment when everyone set out to rebirth in the human realm, and Amitabha Buddha gave instructions to each one of us in turn. In our world, no spoken language is needed; we communicate directly through consciousness. Yet, in the end, Amitabha Buddha spoke a passage in two human languages for everyone to etch it deeply in their hearts—one in Sanskrit and the other in Chinese.

“People are easy to liberate, but the Buddhas are difficult to transform.

This journey extends for three thousand years; a single thread of longing emotion becomes a towrope, ensuring you find your way home.

My brave ones, ride the Boat of Prajna.

fully laden with sentient beings, crossing to the other shore.

One single thought of compassion transforms into Dharma rain, nourishing immeasurable beings throughout the Dharma Realm.”

Everyone gave their pledge, and Amitabha Buddha repeatedly reminded Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva to be sure to bring back every one of the younger Dharma brothers. Time flies, and 2,900 years passed. Each one had their assigned role and faithfully fulfilled their duties. For the sake of the Dharma-transmitting mission, they even picked up various attachments they had not originally possessed. Fortunately, none was too serious, and in just 100 more years they will be able to return home.

A single thread of longing emotion turned into a sharp sword, beginning to cut through all kinds of afflictions and attachments:

The tongue faculty was extinguished—my tongue began to change, and my sense of taste grew increasingly faint. Although I could still distinguish sour, sweet, bitter, and spicy, the difference between “delicious” and “not delicious” no longer existed. Even when I was very hungry, seeing all kinds of delicious food did not give rise to a single thought of eating.

The nose faculty was extinguished—my nose underwent changes, and my sense of smells grew increasingly faint. I no longer even felt that the bathroom was especially foul.

The ear faculty was extinguished—once entering into dhyana, I was no longer affected by sounds. No matter how loud the noise was outside, I could not hear it.

The body faculty was extinguished—I experienced physical lightness and ease, feeling as if my body was as light as a feather. Even walking felt weightless. My spirit grew vigorous, my face glowed with a rosy hue, and my eyes shone with brilliance. However, when living among others, such a conspicuous appearance would only bring unnecessary trouble. So, I resumed performing prostrations and joined in worshiping the Buddha to consume some energy, while also reducing my food intake. During evening meditation, I practiced Inner Alchemy Method, trying my best to retract my Qi and to appear like an ordinary person.

The eye faculty was extinguished—this belongs to the realms within meditation, so I will not speak of it .

Finally, the emotions of suffering were extinguished, and the world instantly dissolved. I saw the truth: mountains are mountains, waters are waters, sentient beings are still sentient beings, and suffering is still suffering—this is what is called true wisdom!

My story has come to an end!

To you, who I am does not matter; as long as you grasp the essence of Buddha Recitation Samadhi, you will hold the key to go to the Pure Land.

I have said many things I probably should not have said, but I trust they will not impact my future. If necessary, I will delete all the posts I've made online—after all, to you, I am merely a virtual persona.

In this lifetime, I was reborn in South Korea and am now a Korean. I was born as a Korean in this life. This year, it's time for me to return home, bringing to an end my dharma practice here. The higher guides entrusted me with the task of transmitting the Dharma in Korea, making me the only one among our group of Dharma brothers to be reborn abroad. The others are all in mainland China and Taiwan. We are entrusted with Mahayana Buddhism and transmitting the true path to liberation.

Throughout the past 2,900 years, I have been reborn in China, Korea, and wherever else I was needed! I have never considered myself a being of this Earth, nor do I care about my nationalities.

May everyone may receive the empowerment of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and may we all be rebirth together in the Pure Land!

May this Dharma offering be offered to the Buddhas in all ten directions.

May we, together with all sentient beings, be rebirth in the Pure Land;

May we behold the Buddha of immeasurable Life and together accomplish the Buddha-path.

May all who read this text—be it with joy or skepticism, with praise or defamation—attain liberation. Should even a single person fail to attain it, I vow not to achieve perfect enlightenment!

6. The Evolution of Practice Methods

During the time when the Buddha was in the world, most of his disciples had excellent foundations; many were rebirth Bodhisattvas and Arhats. Therefore, in the later stages of his teachings, the Buddha emphasized the doctrine of emptiness, teaching it especially for the Bodhisattvas.

For the first 500 years after the Buddha's nirvana, most of those propagating the Dharma were rebirth Bodhisattvas. Their directly practiced Prajna Paramita (Perfection of wisdom), aiming straight at Buddhahood. Although achieving Buddhahood was not possible, their practice was still the highest—directly seeking emptiness and Patience of the Non-Arising of the Phenomena.

In the next 500 years, people's spiritual capacities declined by one level—but Arhats still predominated. They practiced the Bodhisattva Vehicle of the Six Paramitas—namely, the Nine Dhyanas of the Arhat. Their goal was to become Bodhisattvas by practicing advanced dhyanas that extinguish the discriminating mind.

In the following centuries, people's spiritual capacities declined by yet another level—many were Sravakas (Sound Hearers) or heavenly beings return. They practiced the Arhat Vehicle for Liberation, aiming at liberation of the karmic cycle of life and death as Arhat. They practiced the Four Dhyanas in Formless Realm. From this point onward, the concept of observation was introduced—using the discriminating mind to observe the attachments to the six consciousnesses.

The Tiantai School's Method of Samatha and Vipasyana (Calm Abiding and Insight) also emerged during this period. The Tiantai school regards Nagarjuna Bodhisattva of India as its first patriarch. Being a reincarnated Bodhisattva, he indeed transmitted methods of observation, but from the realm of Bodhisattva, he directly used delusion to observe all prior minds of discriminating and attachments. When this method reached China, the Second Patriarch Venerable Huiwen in the Northern Qi Era, developed a form of observation suited to the people of that time—a prototype of the Tiantai School's Method of Samatha and Vipasyana. This was more than a thousand years after the Buddha's nirvana!

In the subsequent few hundred years, people's spiritual capacities again declined by yet another level, and various emotions of suffering began to emerge. A characteristic of these emotions is that they manifest only when triggered by external conditions. As a response to such emotional states, people began practicing the Zen practice of Huatou.

In China, the Zen practice of Huatou began to gain popularity during the Song Dynasty. Practitioners of Huatou started criticizing those who continued to practice the traditional observation methods, saying their practice was like withered wood and stubborn stone, never to attain enlightenment.

Neither the Samatha and Vipasyana nor the Zen practice of Huatou is wrong in itself; the key lies in the practitioner's spiritual capacities. If a person harbors many hidden emotions, they may think that the observation method is working well. However, when confronted by external circumstances, all those hidden emotions come forth. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the emotion of great questioning, even in times when emotions are absent—using the method of contemplating great questioning to extinguish hidden emotions.

A few hundred years later, people not only had burning emotions but also highly scattered attention. When they tried to contemplate great questioning, their attention disrupted them, making it impossible to maintain a steady focus on the emotional ground. At that time, various methods arose for observing the body and the realms of the five sense faculties.

This type of observation differs from the earlier Samatha and Vipasyana method! Observing the body relies on attention, whereas the observation in Samatha and Vipasyana relies on the mind of discrimination.

To distinguish between these two types of observation, people introduced the concept of " panoramic awareness" (Zhao). The process of focusing attention is called "focused observation" (Guan), while using the discriminating mind to observe preceding attachments is called "panoramic awareness" (Zhao). Together, they form the term "focused observation and panoramic awareness" (Guanzhao).

Observation has both a subject that observes and an object that is observed. The object must be singular, requiring highly focused attention on one point.

Panoramic awareness is using the discriminating mind to simultaneously observe all preceding attachments—including emotions and bodily sensations. One must be simultaneously aware of external sounds, the darkness before the eyes, the sensation of friction between skin and clothing, the temperature within the body, the temperature outside of it, and so on. In short, panoramic awareness means awareness of all sensations of the body and mind at once, like a lightbulb suspended in the air that radiates light in all directions. The term "Panoramic awareness" is most fitting.

A few hundred years later, in the Qing Dynasty, people not only had intense emotions and scattered attention but were further tormented by attachment to verbal thoughts. Thus, early practices such as reciting the Buddha's name, reciting mantras, and reciting sutras became widespread as methods to extinguish the attachment to verbal thought.

The Buddha foresaw the spiritual capacities of people in the Dharma-Ending Age, therefore he taught the Amitabha Sutra. He declared that within the Dharma-Ending Age, the Method of Buddha Recitation would be the most suitable practice.

In modern times, emotions, attention, and attachment to verbal thoughts are all exceptionally intense. The more scattered thoughts arise, the more rapid the breathing becomes, and the body deteriorates all the more. Thus, we can only begin with the breath, first practicing a healthy method of breathing.

If you understand the evolution of different practices and the change in people's spiritual capacities, you'll no longer waste time poring over Buddhist sutras to study doctrines or arguing empty theories with others!

We are not on the same level as the great practitioners who emerged in the 500 years after the Buddha's nirvana—the texts they wrote were never meant for people like us!

It's like kindergarten children feeling proud for reading a doctoral dissertation—isn't that ridiculous? You haven't truly understood it; you're just playing with words.

Section 03: From Dhyana in the Desire Realm to the First Dhyana

Traditionally , the Chan (Zen) School avoids talking about the realms within dhyana, because once people hear of them they may pursue them deliberately and end up going astray.

In Chapter 2, I explained in detail the Three Qi Return to the Origin. If you haven't achieved this state or entered the state of "sitting in forgetfulness", you should not concern yourself with the realms within dhyana.

In this world, there is no way to cultivate consciousness while bypassing the body! Many people think the Dharma is solely about cultivating the consciousness without addressing the body—this is a serious mistake! If the body is not in a state of complete health, one simply cannot enter dhyana.

Moreover, dhyana in the Desire Realm is aimed at extinguishing sexual desire—you must have this right understanding! Without a resolute vow to extinguish sexual desire—just as without resolving to abstain from meat without first making that resolve—you likewise cannot extinguish sexual desire and enter the First Dhyana.

So, what about lay Buddhists who have not become Buddhist monks?

And what about those who have a wife?

Rest assured, even without sexual desire, one can still have sex. When the thought arises, the body naturally responds, so you will not become impotent. However, one who has extinguished sexual desire feels no pleasure—neither during the act nor at the end. Just take it as fulfilling a husband's duty. When one's internal force is strong enough, one can direct it downward to control the valve, and the timing can be controlled at will. As for women, I do not understand fully, since they are generally passive, let it likewise be taken as fulfilling a duty without sexual desire.

Let us assume that you have already succeeded in abstaining from meat, completed the preparatory practices of reciting sutras and mantras, eliminated 80% of your sexual desire and 80% of your attachment to verbal thought, and achieved Three Qi Return to the Origin, entering a state of absolute health.

When you first unblock your body's meridians, you'll feel extraordinarily comfortable—Qi surges through your body and circulates freely. Some people at this stage get restless and shift their attention now to the brow center, now to the Dantian. Some even shift it to both hands, imagining—like masters in martial-arts novels—that they can project internal force outward and push objects from a distance with telekinetic power; but playing like this can throw the flow of Qi off and easily injure the internal organs! Damage to the internal organs caused by one's own internal force is quite difficult to repair. You can't fix it with medication or injections, nor can you seek assistance from someone else to unblock it with their internal force. Besides, there are no such masters nowadays. Genuine practitioners with internal force consider their power precious and are reluctant to give it away casually. Even if they do help, each person's internal force has a different composition and can conflict with your own—sometimes the more they help, the worse it gets.

In monasteries where people practice meditation, things like this happen fairly often. Usually they are told to handle it themselves; if that fails, Acupuncture may be used to guide the internal Qi—but only by a master practitioner. I spell out these frightening consequences only to remind everyone to be careful.

At this stage, you must stick to conventional practicing methods diligently: reciting the Buddha's name, observing the breath, and contemplating Huatou.

Actually, at this stage you haven't yet reached the realms of sitting in forgetfulness. It's like building a dirt road, and cars can now run on it—but with a lot of clattering and banging. This isn't enough! If you upgrade the road to a railway, trains can run faster and smoother; if you upgrade to maglev , it's even more comfortable—there's no sound caused by friction.

The same principle applies to your meridians. If you can feel the Qi flowing, it means your meridians haven't been thoroughly cleansed yet. It's like water running through a rough, uneven pipe with sand in it—gurgling and rattling as it flows. When your meridians are completely clean and open, and internal Qi is abundant, you won't sense the movement of Qi anymore—you have fully entered a state of absolute health! At that point, you will truly forget the existence of your body and enter a calm state of dhyana in the desire realm.

At this stage, some people lose awareness of themselves and fully immerse in the serene state of dhyana. It's like a lazy cat, after having a full meal, climbing onto a sunny balcony to nap in the sunlight. If you regard this as a good realm, you will not be able to move forward.

Why do people feel so comfortable? It still needs an explanation!

In fact, from birth to the present, all the sensations our body gives us are painful—but we've simply grown used to them! As long as we're not sick or injured, we assume we're healthy. But that's not true! Even a very healthy person exposed to drugs can still become addicted. Drugs numb the nerves, making you unable to feel the body's pain, and this already feels very comfortable. Some drugs also produce hallucinations, making one feel as if floating on the clouds, in extreme ecstasy. When the effect of the drug wears off and the body's sensations return, what once felt "normal" now feels quite painful, so one continues to take drugs.

Entering the realms of sitting in forgetfulness is like this—but it is not caused by drugs. It's because your body has truly reached a state of absolute health and no longer gives you even the slightest pain, so you forget its existence. Immersed in this, you may sit for hours without noticing the passage of time.

At this point, you must awaken, continue practicing conventional methods, and hold on to consciousness—do not let it, like in drowsiness, cut off awareness.

After sitting for a while, sexual desire begins to arise. Earlier, I assumed you had eradicated 80% of your sexual desire; if you hadn't, it would be very difficult to enter the realm of sitting in forgetfulness. Even if you do enter it, when sexual desire arises, it comes with great intensity. All kinds of images leap into your mind, vivid like a lifelike movie; your body immediately responds, so that you are pulled out of dhyana.

If you've eradicated 80% of sexual desire, when it arises, it comes in a very subtle form. It begins with emotion—you may feel a very subtle desire beginning to arise-neither attention, nor attachment to verbal thought, or mental imagery; it just arises lightly. You must carefully observe its changes. As soon as the emotion arises, the body begins to react.

Originally, you would no longer feel the flow of Qi; the Qi of the Ren and Du meridians flows downward in the front of the body—from Renzhong point (the philtrum) to the Dantian. But this Qi will gather in the Dantian, condensing bit by bit into a warm current, which then divides into two paths—one upward, one downward:

—One stream of Qi reverses and flows upward, entering the Danzhong acupoint and then the heart. Originally, you would not even feel your heartbeat, but once this Qi enters, your heartbeat speeds up, your blood circulation accelerates, and subsequently, your entire body begins to heat up.

—Another stream of Qi flows directly from the Dantian into the genital organ! It was originally supposed to downflow to the Huiyin acupoint (the perineum), but when this Qi enters the genital area, directing blood flow along with Qi, the blood causing the genital organ to swell—at this point, you come out of dhyana.

Nothing should be forced—especially not practice—the more rush you are, the less it works! As long as you sit in meditation every day and don't neglect reciting sutras or mantras, that is enough.

When your practice reaches a certain level, you can cut off sexual desire at the very moment it arises as emotion—preventing the body from reacting.

So in the end, how can you tell whether you have completely extinguished sexual desire?

It's still a test in your dreams! While in the dhyana in the Desire Realm, you haven't yet extinguished the attachment of verbal thought and attention, so you still need to sleep at night.

—In your dreams, beautiful women may appear. At first, you go along with them without the slightest hesitation. This shows your practice is still not accomplished.

—After some time, another dream occurs. This time, you hesitate for a long while, but in the end you still go along with it. That's still not enough.

—After some more time, you have another dream. This time, you restrain yourself, but the beautiful woman in the dream isn't like a plate of meat. Meat is lifeless and will not jump into your mouth, but the woman in the dream actively approaches you, touching your body and genital organ, and once again you surrender.

—After some more time, another dream occurs. This time, you are firm. When she tries to seduce you, you push her away and say:" I am a Buddha disciple, practicing pure Brahma conduct (celibacy)—I don't engage in such unclean acts."

At this point, you have successfully extinguished sexual desire! Sitting in meditation again, you will enter the First Dhyana.

Once sexual desire is extinguished, you'll be able to see your past lives during dhyana . However, this ability has significant limitations: you can only see events you've already experienced in this life and the corresponding causes from your past lives. You still cannot see your own future—let alone anyone else.

However, there is one particularly crucial piece of information that you must not overlook—your situation before your birth! Before birth, everyone makes vows: what they intend to do in this life, or which karmic causes and effects to resolve and what karmic retributions they are prepared to undergo, and so on.

This information is extremely important for you! Once you know it, you won't indulge in unrealistic fantasies! The life you're living now is precisely the one you planned for yourself before being born. You won't pursue unrealistic fame or fortune anymore. Your heart will be at peace, and even when misfortune arises, you won't feel panic—you'll simply see it as repaying a karmic debt. While, your practice must still continue!

Every time I reread what I've written, I feel that some things are better presented in as much detail as possible. This applies both to beginners and experienced practitioners. Waiting until problems arise and then looking for a remedy is the inferior course—it's a passive and reactive position! Therefore, prioritizing prevention is the fundamental principle in all matters.

While in dhyana in the Desire Realm to extinguish sexual desire, as you are about to completely extinguish sexual desire, you may encounter Demonic Hindrances. Among the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm, the highest is the Heaven of Comfort Gained Through Others' Transformations, called the Demonic Heaven. The heavenly king there does not believe in the Buddha. If he sees someone about to extinguish sexual desire and enter the First Dhyana, he may send beings to cause trouble.

To address such obstacles, Shakyamuni Buddha also left a specific mantra, the Mantra of the Ucchusma Vajra (Vajra of Impurity). You can find online explanations of how this mantra originated and what it is used for.

When you work to extinguish sexual desire, you can recite this mantra. Memorize it and recite it regularly. If any obstacles arise during your dhyana, reciting it will dispel them. Even in sleep, if seductive ghosts come to have sex with you and drain your vital energy, reciting this mantra will drive them away.

Additionally, during the process of unblocking all the meridians in your body, you should also choose a conventional method to practice. First, follow that method, and when bodily pain arises, your attention will be drawn to the pain. Persist with the method for as long as you can.

Although the method itself may have no significance for this particular stage of practice, it helps you develop a habit. Once you enter the realms of sitting in forgetfulness, the habit becomes active: it'll help you quickly regain awareness and come out of the state of unawareness and immersion in a state of serene bliss.

Section 04: From the First Dhyana to the Fourth Dhyana

In dhyana of the Desire Realm, one must extinguish sexual desire to enter the First Dhyana—the criterion is keeping precepts in dreams.

In the First Dhyana, one extinguishes the realms of the nose and tongue faculties in order to enter the Second Dhyana. In the Second Dhyana, one eradicates the realms of the ear, body, and eye faculties in order to enter the Third Dhyana. Because in the First and second Dhyana the realms of the five sense faculties are extinguished in succession, there is no special sensation between them.

However, the Third Dhyana does have a clear criterion: one can remain in dhyana for three, four, five, six, or even more days. Any attention corresponding to the realms of the five sense faculties does not arise to cause one to come out of dhyana, then this is the Third Dhyana.

In the Third Dhyana, one extinguishes emotions of suffering, and when these emotions break, one enters the lower level of the Fourth Dhyana. Breaking through the emotions of suffering is accompanied by a distinct special feeling—it's called Enlightenment. This experience cannot be expressed in words! In an instant, a great chiliocosm dissolves, and one perceives people and things with complete clarity—seeing mountains as mountains, water as water. Only a subtle and continuous joy remains.

Theoretically, practitioners can stay in dhyana until death. Reaching this point is called Sravaka (Sound-Hearers)—the highest realm of practice attainable for ordinary beings in the Dharma-Ending Age. I recommend the movie "Zen"—it vividly describes the moment of enlightenment.

What is a Sravaka (Sound-Hearer)? One who attains enlightenment by hearing the teaching! From beginning to here, instruction can be taught through words and language. When you learn from a teacher, he also teaches you using words; and when you read the sutras on your own, it is still through words.

When the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths, he said that the goal of practice is to extinguish all suffering. At this point, one has achieved that goal—there is no more suffering.

During the Buddha's lifetime, those with superior spiritual capacity could make further breakthroughs on this foundation. In dhyana, they would observe the joy and realize that this emotion of joy is the root of all conditioned phenomena. It is from this emotion of joy that the emotions of suffering arise; both emotions of suffering and joy give rise to the realms of five sense faculties. Understanding this, he resolved to extinguish the emotion of joy.

At this point, personal practice is complete.

The subsequent higher stages of practice are beyond the reach of ordinary beings like us. Even having a teacher won't help—and I will explain why in Chapter Four!

Section 05: Hallucinations in Dhyana

Today, I will discuss the various hallucinations that can occur during Dhyana.

First, you need to enter the dhyana of the Desire Realm and awaken from the state of self-forgetting bliss. From this point until you reach the Third Dhyana, numerous hallucinations will arise. What causes them? How can you discern between the real and the unreal? I hope you carefully read this section—it's critically important! Without understanding these points, you might fall victim to these illusions and not even realize how or why it happened.

First, you need to understand the causes—once you understand the causes, these phenomena become much less frightening.

Hallucinations can be divided into internal and external ones. One is the invasion of outer demons! If you seek supernatural powers (Siddhis), the likelihood of encountering such situations increases significantly. On the other hand, if you refrain from inappropriate desires, the chances of being disturbed by outer demons decrease greatly. Furthermore, from the very beginning of your practice, you must choose a mantra to safeguard yourself. Once something disturbs you, you recite the mantra. As long as you're not greedily pursuing things you shouldn't have like supernatural powers, as soon as you recite the mantra, the outer demons will be scared away. It doesn't matter whether it's the Shurangama Mantra, the Great Compassion Mantra, the Vajra Filth Mantra (Huiji Jin'gang Zhou), or the Cundhi Bodhisattva Mantra—they all work!

The second reason is the disturbance of inner demons (Cittamāra). This needs to be explained for three causes—the past, present, and future.

Let's begin with the future. If you have strong expectations for the future, hallucinations may easily arise. For example, supposing you deeply love your husband or child, if they are away from home, you long for their return every day. Sometimes, you may even dream that your husband or child has come back, opening the door and walking in. You feel immense joy—only to wake up and realize it was a dream.

Here's another example involving my grandmother. When she passed away, I wasn't by her side. My parents took care of her, so I grew up with her, and she loved me dearly. I didn't go back home until a few months after her death. My mother told me that in the year before my grandmother passed away, she would often sit by the window during the day, looking outside. Occasionally, she would suddenly call my mother and say "My grandson is being beaten by some gangsters outside! You're his mother—go call the police right away! Go save him!"

At first, my mom was startled and immediately ran to the window to check. But there was nothing unusual—just people walking back and forth in the street. She then realized that my grandmother was starting to experience hallucinations. A few months later, the situation got worse and worse. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, my grandmother would suddenly get up and wake my mom and say "My grandson is back! Hurry up and get up to cook for him!" My mother was helpless. After all, my grandmother was 86 years old, and they couldn't give her sleeping pills. When I heard my mom recounting these events, I felt a deeply sour and uncomfortable taste in my heart.

The point of sharing this story isn't to highlight my personal sorrow but to illustrate that when someone intensely yearns for something to happen, they can generate hallucinations—and this occurs even more frequently during meditation! The things or people you yearn for will appear as extraordinarily realistic hallucinations. This is the first cause of hallucinations.

The second cause is the primal desires you currently have. For instance, if you harbor sexual desire, you might experience erotic dreams. If you have a strong appetite for food, you may dream about indulging

in a sumptuous feast. It's the same during meditation: if you have sexual desires, sometimes a beautiful woman will appear in your hallucinations to seduce you—and this goes without saying.

The third cause pertains to the past—what I call the lingering impressions of the five faculties.

Let's start with the eyes! If you spend ten hours a day watching TV dramas, even when you close your eyes, the drama scenes will still play out in your mind—you might even dream about them. During my school days, I was once obsessed with arcade games. I spent long hours playing games, and when I would lie down at home, closing my eyes, the game scenes would still appear vividly in my mind. I would even dream about playing games at night and talk about gaming in my sleep. These are lingering impressions! Things you have stared at for a long time leave lingering impressions in your visual faculty, which later can manifest as hallucinations when you're not actively looking at them.

The same phenomenon applies to your ears! If you listen to songs for ten hours a day, once you take off your headphones, the melody will still be buzzing in—it's like a little bug was crawling around inside.

The same holds true for the other three faculties! Overuse of any of them will leave lingering impressions.

We've lived countless lifetimes in these physical bodies, and within the aggregates of our five faculties lies a vast repository of lingering impressions—all tied to past experiences. During dhyana, these lingering impressions turn into vivid hallucinations that appear in your consciousness. And it's not just a single lingering impression from one faculty that manifests; instead, impressions from all five faculties combine to create a detailed, lifelike hallucination.

Once during a meditation session in the meditation hall with about twenty fellow practitioners, I was fully immersed in experiencing the meditative state without distracting thought. Suddenly, I had a vivid hallucination: the meditation hall's door was split open with a massive ax, and several burly soldiers walked in, all wearing ancient armor; they started attacking people as soon as they entered. With one ax swing, they split the head of the person closest to the door into two, and brain matter splattered everywhere. On the other hand, a soldier swung a broad saber horizontally—one person's head rolled right under my meditation mat. The headless body remained upright, while blood gushed from the neck like a fountain, splattering onto the ceiling, and the severed head lying in front of me still displayed the serene expression of meditation. Then, another soldier armed with a spear charged in and started impaling one person after another, killing several in a row.

At this point, everyone stood up in panic! The soldiers continued slashing indiscriminately, and within moments, more than ten people were lying on the floor. Severed arms and legs were scattered everywhere, with intestines spilling all over the ground.

I was so overwhelmed by the horrific scene that I almost screamed out. But when I opened my eyes, everything was as usual—everyone was still sitting silently in meditation. My chest felt tight, my heart was pounding furiously, and I was drenched in sweat. Luckily, I didn't wet myself—that scare was really bad!

I couldn't care less whether the session had ended or not; I got off my seat, only to find my legs trembling intensely. I walked toward the door step by step, slowly, and didn't dare make a sound. The head

monk in the meditation hall noticed my pale face and sweat-soaked head and immediately understood that I had encountered a hallucination, so he didn't say anything. I went out of the hall to drink some water and took a walk, but it took a very long time for me to calm down.

All my life, I'd only seen people being killed in TV shows or movies. When we watch TV or movies, we have a subconscious thought that tells us these things are fake. So no matter how realistic or terrifying they are, it might, at most, excite us briefly—nowhere near the intensity of my actual experience. I think in my past lives, I must have done a lot of terrible things like killing and setting fires, which is why such a hallucination appeared.

So, we've now analyzed the causes—lingering impressions from the past five faculties, primal desires of the present, and expectations for the future.

Among these three causes, expectations for the future account for a relatively small proportion. This is because practitioners generally don't harbor extensive anticipations about the future, and even if they do, they're unlikely to visualize them in great detail. For instance, if you hope to get admitted to Peking University, you'll at most just have that hope. You wouldn't vividly fantasize about details, such as the classrooms you might study in, the meals you'd eat in the cafeteria, or the conversations you'd have with dormitory roommates. You won't visualize these things in such detail, so the hallucinations caused by expectations for the future aren't very common.

In reality, we all live in the past and the present! Our past memories have shaped who we are now, and they've also shaped our various desires and habits today. Therefore, the true causes of hallucinations are largely rooted in lingering impressions of the five faculties from the past and the primal desires of the present.

Moreover, our memories tend to focus more on painful experiences. Joyful and happy moments usually fade away without recall, but painful memories linger deeply. We often recall those past sufferings, reliving the emotions associated with them. That's why in the early stages of dhyana, the hallucinations are typically distressing.

As your practice deepens, the lingering impressions of the five faculties and primal desires gradually diminish, and the hallucinations become fewer and fewer. Then, the influence of expectations for the future begins to increase. Since our expectations are usually of good things, the hallucinations manifesting from these anticipations tend to be pleasant. You may start seeing images of things you deeply hope for in your hallucinations.

So, how do you tell the difference between real things and hallucinations?

In fact, there's no need to differentiate—everything is unreal! Just ignore them.

Let's begin with hallucinations originating from the eye faculty.

Suppose there's a camera in your consciousness—one that lets you take photos of what you see to show others, or draw what you see for others. All these things are hallucinations arising from the realm of the eye faculty (visual faculty)—and they're all unreal! Don't pay any attention to it. No matter how terrifying the scene you see during meditation, it's all unreal!

You might see a massive fire engulfing the land, turning people into charred remains; you might see vast floods washing over everything, with floating corpses littering the water; or perhaps a nightmare battlefield with flesh and blood flying everywhere—all of these are unreal! Don't mind them.

You might see women dancing gracefully, or encounter your loved ones or deceased relatives. Perhaps, you'll see a giant golden Buddha or a Bodhisattva seated amid radiant, multicolored lights, with countless monks gathered below, listening to their teachings. All of these are unreal!

In short, if it's something you could sketch onto paper, then it's unreal! It's a hallucination produced by the eye faculty.

Now let's talk about hallucinations arising from the ear faculty.

Imagine your consciousness has a recorder that could capture the sounds you hear and play them back to others. If this is the case, then it's unreal! Don't pay any attention to it.

You might hear all sorts of terrifying ghostly wails, unpleasant cries of anguish, the sound of thunder or rain, or even voices hurling insults at you and cursing you to go to hell. All of these are unreal!

You might hear incredibly beautiful music, or the voice of your loved one calling your name, or perhaps the voice of a family member exhorting you. You may even hear solemn and resonant voices narrating your past-life karma or explaining the Supreme Dharma. All of these are unreal!

As long as you identify it as sound that could be recorded and played back for others, it is unreal—it's a hallucination produced by the ear faculty! Moreover, the ear and eye faculties frequently work together to create hallucinations that feel as vivid as watching a 3D movie, complete with an immersive, lifelike experience.

Now on to hallucinations related to the body faculty.

If you feel your body being harmed in any way during meditation, it's always hallucination! You might feel like you're engulfed in flames, being burned alive. You could feel the excruciating chill of frozen ice cutting to your bones. You might sense venomous insects crawling all over your body, biting into your flesh. Or perhaps you'll feel as though you've been immersed into a vat of acid—your skin and flesh melting away piece by piece, leaving only bare bones.

You might feel as though your body is inflating like a balloon, eventually bursting into fragments after a loud explosion. Or you might feel your body gradually shrinking until it vanishes entirely into the wind.

You could sense all the moisture in your body evaporating rapidly, leaving you as a mummy. Or perhaps you'll feel your body shattering like glass, struck by some unseen force.

You might feel as though you've fallen into a boiling pot, being cooked alive into soup. Or you might experience being caught in a calamity of warfare, and a group of people are chopping you into pieces. These kinds of painful and terrifying sensations are all hallucinations generated by the body faculty-they are unreal! Don't pay them any attention.

You might feel as though you've grown wings, floating effortlessly into the sky, freely gliding through vast open space. You might feel an intense sense of comfort, as if under the influence of some

intoxicating drug. Or you might feel the presence of the friction of a beautiful woman's body against yours, making you feel itchy with desire. All of these pleasant sensations are hallucinations! Don't pay attention to them.

I won't go into detail about the nose faculty and the tongue faculty—the illusions produced by these two faculties are relatively few! At most, you might smell something foul or fragrant, or taste something extremely unpleasant, such as feces or rotten flesh, or something delicious.

In the early stages of dhyana, the hallucinations you encounter are typically terrifying—this is due to the lingering impressions of the five faculties. As your practice deepens, these terrifying hallucinations will gradually decrease. At the same time, your primal desires and future expectations may begin to produce pleasant hallucinations. However, they are unreal. Anything perceivable through the five faculties, whether pleasant or unpleasant, is unreal! Don't pay attention to any of it.

If terrifying hallucinations frighten you and cause you to come out of dhyana, just take a break and regain your composure before sitting again—or try again the next day. If beautiful hallucinations appear during dhyana, you must not become attached to them at all; otherwise, the hallucinations will only get worse, and your practice will stay stuck in the same place instead of moving forward.

There are many types of hallucinations, but since they're all unreal, why dwell on the matter? Pay close attention—what comes next is the crucial point.

When your practice starts to extinguish the sensory realms of the five faculties, the nature of hallucinations will undergo a fundamental transformation! You must understand that even this world, which appears so real, is ultimately unreal—it's all a hallucination formed by our delusions, discriminations, and attachments, manifesting as an illusion.

For example, you may begin to smell an extraordinary fragrance during meditation, which brings you great joy and you begin to grow attached to it. This fragrance becomes increasingly strong, eventually emanating from your own body. Every time you sit in meditation, this unusual fragrance will appear on you. Those around you, sensing the fragrance, may regard you as an accomplished practitioner and show you great reverence. You'll also start indulging in this realm. This is merely an illusion produced by the nose faculty realm as it approaches its breaking point!

If you mistake this as some profound realm and cling to it, then you might go on exuding this fragrance until the day you die—and your practice will never achieve a higher breakthrough.

You might feel your body as light as a feather during meditation, floating freely in the air. It fills you with joy, and you start to grow attached to this feeling. Over time, this sensation of weightlessness may intensify and extend outward. Eventually, when you enter into dhyana, your body may actually begin to levitate from the meditation cushion, slowly rotating or moving in midair without you noticing it. Those around you, observing such an extraordinary sight, might think of you as an advanced practitioner and show you great respect. You, in turn, may grow deeply attached to this experience. However, this is merely an illusion arising from the body faculty realm as it nears its breaking point!

If you mistakenly regard this as some lofty realms, then you may spend the rest of your life levitating—but without making any further breakthroughs in your practice!

You may see bright, colorful lights during meditation, or perhaps beautiful red-tinged yellow lights. It fills you with joy, and you start to grow attached to them. This light spreads outward; when you enter into dhyana, your body actually begins to glow. This is especially true when you meditate at night, the light might even penetrate through walls and ceilings. From a distance, it could look as though a fire or a rainbow is descending to the earth.

Others might see this sight and assume you are an advanced practitioner, showing you great reverence. You might then become obsessed with this experience. However, this, too, is merely an illusion arising from the realm of eye faculty as it nears its breaking point!

If you mistakenly regard this as lofty realms, you may spend your life shining with light—but your practice will remain stagnant without achieving further breakthroughs!

When you encounter such substantial illusions, you must not become attached to them! Believe that these are all illusions, the final struggles of the realms of five sense faculties before their extinguishment. Only by doing this can you successfully free yourself from the constraints of your body, break through the realms of the five sense faculties, and enter the Third Dhyana.

At this point, I have already explained three conventional methods of practice and described the various experiences you might encounter during your practice. Treat these teachings like a story to listen to and just reflect upon when the time comes.

When your practice reaches these realms and hallucinations begin to arise, you will recall that someone once explained that these phenomena are all unreal and should not be taken seriously. If you have this correct preconceived view in your mind, you'll easily break free from the realms.

Section 06: The Stages of Dhyana

1. The Stages of Dhyana and Essence, Qi, Spirit

"Refine Essence into Qi" is originally a Taoist term. However, Buddhist practice places its focus on the mind and not addresses the body. Yet, the body is a very real obstacle. Thus, to discuss Buddhist practice without addressing the body is nothing more than empty theory for modern people. Therefore, we use Taoist terminology to explain the body changes in practice.

We speak of Refine Essence into Qi, Refine Qi into Spirit, and Refine Spirit to Return to the Void. Placed within the stages of Dhyana, they correspond as follows:

—Refining Essence corresponds to the Dhyana in the Desire Realm.

—Refining Qi corresponds to the First Dhyana and the Second Dhyana.

—Refining Spirit corresponds to the Third Dhyana.

—Returning to the Void corresponds to the Fourth Dhyana.

What exactly are Essence, Qi, and Spirit?

—Essence is vitality.

—Spirit is light.

—To expand the luminous sphere of the Yang Spirit into space is called Returning to the Void.

Let us begin with Essence.

Essence is vitality, and it can produce heat. In the early stages of meditation, entering the Dhyana of the Desire Realm and eradicating sexual desire is the process of Refining Essence. This vitality is innate, we bring it with us when we come out of our mother's womb.

How does Essence manifest? For example, a child who knows nothing about sexual intercourse may have an erection even without sexual desire or the need to urinate—this is how Essence shows itself.

When a person becomes weak, or grows old to the point that he wants to have sex but his male genital organ can no longer erect, it means his Essence has been exhausted. This is why practice is for the young! If you wait until old age—when the male genital organ can no longer rise—to begin practice, there will still be progress, but it will be very slow.

If you usually don't have morning erections, but after meditating for a few days you do, it shows that meditation has strengthened your Essence—that is, your vitality.

All sentient beings below the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm are born from sexual desire. What is sexual intercourse? It is the process of using one's own vitality to create new life. When you expend your limited vitality to bring forth new life, your own vitality will decrease—this is an inevitable law of nature.

Some animals and insects die right after mating or laying eggs because they put all their vitality into creating new life, the price is death. Therefore, if you want to Refine Essence, moderation in sexual activity is necessary.

Refining Essence does not necessarily require abstinence, moderate sexual activity is acceptable. However, it must not be too frequent. If sexual activity occurs at a pace faster than your body's recovery speed, the body will not be able to bear it.

From a medical perspective, one act of sexual intercourse consumes more than 300 calories—about the same as an hour of walking. The semen released contains only a small amount of protein and trace elements, which can be replenished by eating one meal. So, if you eat three meals a day, in theory three sexual acts should not be a problem.

But reality is not that simple! If you are between 15 and 20, three times a day may still be possible. But after 25, three times a day will quickly lead to exhaustion. This indicates that sex consumes not just physical energy, but something that food cannot make up for.

Essence can produce heat. When we practice abdominal breathing to a certain level, the body will heat up—this is also the process of repairing the body. Once the body is fully repaired, the extra Essence is used to begin Refining Qi. This Qi is energy, the driving force that supports the body.

Now, let’s talk about Qi.

Qi is of two kinds. One comes from the digestion of food, and is used for physical exertion, mainly for bursts of force. The other is Congenital Qi, energy refined from Essence, which strengthens endurance and physical strength.

Generally, fat people eat more and have strong bursts of force. They can exert great strength in a moment, for example to lift a gas canister, but they have no endurance, and cannot last long in long-distance running.

Conversely, thin people eat less and lack bursts of force—they may not be able to lift a gas canister, but in terms of endurance and physical fitness they are much stronger than fat people. With proper exercise, running several kilometers is not difficult for them.

In practice, what we seek is not a burst of force but endurance—the Qi refined from Essence, our vitality. This Qi not only improves endurance but also greatly increases immunity, making the body healthy and full of energy.

Now, when you meditate, it is easy to feel your body heating up, with a warm current moving through the Ren and Du meridians. This is only the process of refining Essence.

After the body is repaired, it enters the stage of Refining Qi, which corresponds to the First and the Second Dhyana. It feels like the kidneys are being recharged, with a tingling current striking the Du Meridian—this feeling cannot be described in words.

If you want to quickly feel this charging sensation, your meditation must last more than four hours. Sexual desire must be completely eradicated, sexual activity kept to a minimum, and meat must not be eaten.

Finally, Spirit needs no further explanation—it was already covered earlier when talking about the Fourth Dhyana. (For details on Spirit, see Chapter One, Section Two, Huatou Zen.)

2. The Stages of Dhyana and Bodily Characteristics

What bodily characteristics will appear when one reaches the Second or Third Dhyana?

First, a protrusion appears on the crown of the head. Unlike the Buddha's cranial protuberance (Ushnisha), it looks like a chicken comb, with a faint ridge along the midline. This is caused by overlapping fascia at the crown. It’s easy to observe this on bald monks—those who have not practiced to this stage have smooth, round crowns. Some people have a protrusion on the forehead, but that comes from blood and Qi surging upward, not from refining Essence into Qi.

The eyes begin to shine, becoming dark and bright like a child's eyes. The fascia of the face shifts upwards, and skin creases gradually lessen. In particular, the smile lines–the creases running from the sides of the nose to the corners of the mouth–gradually disappear. In Physiognomy, these are called nasolabial folds.

As skin creases decrease and nasolabial folds disappear, one looks much younger than their actual age.

Next, the muscles of the back neck and shoulders become softer, the collarbones higher than ordinary people, the shoulders broaden, and the arms lengthened by one to two finger joints.

The chest expands, the spaces between the ribs increase, and the fascia of the chest stretches, making the whole chest swell and become rounded. In women, the stretching of the fascia lifts sagging breasts, making them firm and smaller, like those of a young girl.

The abdomen swells and the abdominal muscles enlarge and stretch. A sunken navel may protrude, like that of an infant. The reason the navel sinks into the abdominal muscles is that the muscles are stiff and contracted. If the body is a little fat, the protruding navel may not be visible, but on closer touch one will find the navel outside the abdominal muscles, not inside them.

The most crucial characteristic is the Well-retracted male organ—the penis gradually draws back into the abdomen together with the testicles. In women, the uterus shrinks, and menstruation disappears; for those already menopausal, menstruation may return and then disappear again.

As mentioned before, if the male genital organ cannot become erect, it means essence has been exhausted. For women, menopause means essence has dried up, and to practice until menstruation returns is not easy.

There is a story about a nun who attained enlightenment. When the news spread, many came to verify—actually to challenge—including monks who had practiced for many years. A senior monk came with his disciples. The monk presented elaborate doctrinal arguments to the nun. She listened silently for a long time before finally saying, “Take off your pants and show me.” The monk immediately turned around and fled, followed, bewildered, by his disciples.

The well-retracted male organ is a bodily feature that will definitely appear. If you have truly eradicated sexual desire and achieved in refining Essence into Qi, there is no need for so much theory or testing with ancient Zen sayings—take off your pants and it is clear at once!

3. The Stages of Dhyana and the Stages of Relaxation

This section summarizes the journey of practice from the beginning to the Fourth Dhyana in terms of the stages of bodily relaxation.

Buddhist practice focuses on the changes of the mind, and the stages of practice are explained according to these changes. However, such standards are very hard to judge! One cannot even be clear about one’s own level or how to proceed to the next step.

Let’s simply talk about the process of changes in the mind.

Step 1: Eliminating all verbal thoughts, remaining for more than two hours without them—this is the Dhyana of the Desire Realm.

Step 2: Sexual desire is eradicated, and attention is gathered. One can concentrate attention for up to four hours. During this time, attention may wander or be drawn by outside things, but it can be pulled back immediately—this is the First Dhyana.

Step 3: Attention is highly concentrated. One can focus on a single point for more than ten hours, without wandering or being drawn by external things. Even if someone lightly touches you, you will not notice—this is the Second Dhyana.

Step 4: Attention is extinguished, the five sense faculties fall away, and one enters the state of the Yang Spirit. If one contemplates great questioning or emotional longing, one can focus intensely on very subtle emotions, with entry into dhyana lasting over twenty-four hours—this is the Third Dhyana. Without working with emotions, one will basically be blocked at this stage, unable to progress until death.

Step 5: The emotions of suffering are broken, the Yang Spirit begins to spread into space, and the sense of satisfaction in self-existence gradually lessens—this is joy. In theory, the duration after entering dhyana has no limit: one could remain seated until death, and usually three days or more is no problem—this is the Fourth Dhyana.

Here, in practicing Dhyana in the Desire Realm and The First Dhyana, one must sit through the full required time—without getting up in the middle! Because entering dhyana takes a long time, if you get up midway, you cannot feel the phenomenon of arising attention or emotions in later stages, and so cannot know what is blocking your progress.

From the Second Dhyana onward, one may get up in the middle, because the time needed to enter into dhyana is much shorter, and one can enter quickly. But it is not recommended to get up every time! You must try continuous sitting in order to know what your obstacle is.

If one practices Zen according to these standards of mental change, fewer than twenty percent can reach the First Dhyana—more than eighty percent will get stuck at the physical level! Moreover, practitioners usually have a fixed way of thinking: once obstacles appear, they take them as karmic obstacles and think that just enduring will get them through.

But the reality is not that simple. If you do not understand how the body works, blind persistence will only bring death faster.

Therefore, we begin with the body, understanding how it works in detail. Starting with training the body, trying to enter all the stages of dhyana without error.

Stage One: Relaxing the Body

The stiffness of the body is proportional to the amount of delusions in the mind, and even greater. If the mind has 100 delusions, the stiffness of an ordinary person’s body is over 200. Why? Because the stiffness can accumulate!

From the moment we are born, our bodies begin to grow stiffer. If a child is excessively frightened, the abdominal muscles contract instantly—the force of this contraction far exceeds what we can imagine—and it can directly squeeze out both urine and feces!

At the same time, a large amount of blood goes into the heart, blood pressure rises instantly, and intracranial blood pressure rises with it. The capillaries in the brain dilate suddenly. In childhood, blood vessels are very soft and elastic, so they do not burst. But if the capillaries expand too much, they press on

surrounding brain cells, preventing them from working properly, and the person becomes mentally impaired.

Furthermore, abdominal muscles that have contracted too much do not easily relax, and intracranial blood pressure cannot go down. Thus, the impaired person cannot recover, and remains so into adulthood. This is why the degree of bodily stiffness is far greater than the number of delusions.

At the very beginning of practice, you don't need to do much—just lie down and relax the body. With some moderate jogging each day, the body will also relax greatly—stiffness at 200 can quickly drop to 150.

From here, you need to practice breathing and sitting in meditation to reduce body stiffness further. When sitting in meditation, every vibration of the body brings a release, and one feels more at ease—you will find that the level of relaxation is far beyond your imagination.

You might think you've already been very relaxed and comfortable, but with each additional vibration the body relaxes again, becoming even more comfortable, until the sensations of the body become more and more subtle. In this way, it can relax until stiffness reaches 100, equal to the number of delusions.

This is the first stage: relaxing the body—equivalent to the preparatory stage of the Dhyana in the Desire Realm. When sitting in meditation, persist as long as you can, until you can no longer continue!

Stage Two: Adjusting the Body to Extinguish the Mind

At this stage, both body stiffness and delusions are at 100. From here, the nervous system is needed to be activated, facilitating the brain and the body's organs in fully recovering health. The body goes from heating to calm.

The brain and organs continually secrete hormones that make the body comfortable and more relaxed. Stiffness drops to 50, and consciousness also becomes lighter, likewise dropping to 50—corresponding to the stages from the Dhyana in the Desire Realm to the First Dhyana.

Meditation time should be more than two hours, as close as possible to four hours. When sexual desire is eradicated, the cells begin recharging. It must be noted that eradicating sexual desire and having sexual intercourse are two different things. One can have sex without sexual desire, and the energy consumed in one act is not very great actually.

Although sexual activity has some impacts on the cell recharging process, it does not prevent you from entering into dhyana. But if sexual desire is not eradicated, you cannot sit for four hours! After two hours, sexual desire will arise and block you from continuing to sit.

Stage Three: Eradicating the Mind to Regulate the Body

When both body stiffness and the number of delusions drop to 50, you can feel the impacts of delusion on the body.

Whenever emotions arise, the pulling force of the gravitational point in the center of Yang-spirit substance increases, and you feel oppression in the chest. The body stiffens from the outside and contracts inward.

Whenever attention arises, the Yang-spirit substance gathers at the place where attention is placed, forming a gravitational point. If you put your attention outside, it is like applying effort to the ear faculty or eye faculty. The yang-spirit substance then gathers at the head, giving a feeling of swelling in the head.

If you practice the method of the ear faculty, you should not listen to sounds outside at this stage, but listen to the inner sound of the Yang-spirit substance—this is called “listening inward to perceive intrinsic nature”. At this time, the gravitational point is not in the head, but in the center of the Yang-spirit substance, which is the Danzhong.

If you have not reached this level and still use the ears on your head to listen, you will definitely feel swelling in the head.

The eye faculty is the same: do not use the eyes on your head to see, but use the Yang Spirit to see.

Likewise, if you put attention on some part of the body, that place will become congested with blood, and the muscles there will stiffen and contract.

As soon as you start to think, corresponding to verbal thought, the Yang-spirit substance gathers in the head, the brain becomes congested with blood, and there is a feeling of swelling in the head.

In short: emotions cause oppression in the chest and contraction of the body; attention makes the part focused on congested with blood and its muscles stiffen and contract; verbal thought makes the head swell.

Once you can feel how changes of mind affect the body, you will find ways to empty the mind as much as possible.

The better one practices, the less one wants to contact people—listening to others talk is tiring, thinking along with them is tiring, and speaking to them is even more tiring!

When I write articles, I also need to think. As soon as I start thinking, Qi goes to the head, the brain becomes congested with blood, and after about two hours my head begins to swell.

This stage, using the method of emptying of the mind to further relax the body, corresponds to the First Dhyana to the Second Dhyana. Delusions can drop to 20, and body stiffness also drops to 20.

Stage Four: Extinguishing the Mind to Break the Body

When stiffness and delusions both fall below 20, the body begins to rebound. Although you let go of attention and no emotions arise, the body starts to contract inward at one point, stiffening bit by bit from the outer limbs—this is the last barrier to breaking through the body!

As said before, in the Dhyana of the Desire Realm and the First Dhyana, more than eighty percent of people will get stuck in regulating the body. Of the remaining twenty percent of people in practice, fewer than half can live to reach this point, so only about ten percent experience this bodily change. Of these ten percent people in practice, fewer than one in twenty can break through this barrier, perhaps even fewer.

Why does the body rebound? The reason lies in the hidden emotions—emotions that only come out when encountering realms.

If you don't know this, you may just find a quiet place to practice while avoiding the world. With no one disturbing you, emotions of suffering will not arise, and you may think that you practice very well. However, once you go outside and meet people, all kinds of emotions of suffering will arise.

After the Second Dhyana, as you keep striving during sitting meditation, the body may stiffen by itself at a certain moment. This inexplicable phenomenon gives rise to your emotion of unease, and the unease makes the body more stiff—this vicious cycle soon throws you out of meditation!

If this phenomenon repeats for a long time, you will become confused and lose confidence.

If you realize that this is the hidden emotions at play, you should contemplate great questioning or emotional longing. Even when there are no emotions, you must hold to great questioning or emotional longing without letting go—unless emotions of suffering are brought out, they cannot be extinguished!

Even if you contemplate great questioning or emotional longing, and the emotions are very subtle, not heavy, the body may still stiffen. At that time, you should get up and move around—do prostrations, jog lightly to sweat, and return to sitting meditation after rest.

Those who reach this level certainly sit more than ten hours a day. Therefore, it is best to sit again the next day—do not force yourself to keep going!

By repeating in this way, hidden emotions are gradually eliminated, and the body relaxes little by little. When you can hold to the subtle emotion of great questioning or emotional longing during sitting in meditation for well over ten hours, there comes a moment when delusions fall below ten—these delusions only contain emotions. The body stiffness drops to zero, the body fully relaxes, all pores expand, and consciousness breaks through the body's barrier, so that the Yang Spirit goes out of the body.

This stage, breaking through the body's barrier by eradicating hidden emotions, corresponds to the Second Dhyana to the Third Dhyana. People in practice who can live to reach this point are far fewer than one percent.

From the Third Dhyana to the Fourth Dhyana, the body's obstacle is gone!

As long as you keep holding to emotions without letting go, one day when emotions are extinguished, you enter the Fourth Dhyana.

From the First Dhyana onward, there is also an important factor of eliminating karma.

This will be discussed later!

Chapter 4: From the Fourth Dhyana to Arhats

Regarding Dharma practice methods: if you don't cultivate the Pure Land practice and choose a different path, then your practicing level will determine which heavenly realm you can ascend to. To guide such practitioners, Maitreya Bodhisattva has established a Dharma practice site in the Tushita Heaven. If you can transcend the Tushita Heaven, you can receive teachings directly from Maitreya Bodhisattva and continue your learning. Since the Tushita Heaven is within the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm, even if you only reach the Dhyana in the Desire Realm without completely extinguishing sexual desire, you can still go there. Even if you cannot enter the Inner Court, Maitreya Bodhisattva's disciples frequently come out to share teachings. For example, Master Xuyun attained to the Tusita Heaven through contemplating great questioning.

If you cultivate the Pure Land practice, progressing from Buddha name recitation to longing contemplation on the Buddha, continuously making vows for rebirth to the Pure Land:

—By breaking through contemplating emotion of suffering and attaining the lower level of the Fourth Dhyana, you will be reborn in the Middle Grade, Middle Birth of the Pure Land.

—If you are unable to break through contemplating emotion of suffering and only reach the Third Dhyana, you will be reborn in the Middle Grade, Lower Birth.

—Reaching the Second Dhyana qualifies you for the Lower Grade, Upper Birth.

—Reaching the First Dhyana allows for the Lower Grade, Middle Birth.

—Reaching the Desire Realm Dhyana qualifies you for the Lower Grade, Lower Birth.

—Even if you only practice Buddha name recitation until death and never practice meditation, there remains a high chance of achieving rebirth in the Lower Grade, Lower Birth.

The key is that the Pure Land is a world without suffering or samsara! Even if reborn in the Lower Grade, Lower Birth, you can progressively practice until you attain the Upper Grade, Upper Birth and eventually become Arhats and fully severing the cycle of birth and death. As there is no suffering in the Pure Land, practice may require a longer duration.

In the human realm, practitioners with medium capacity who diligently practice for thirty years with suitable methods can generally attain the Third Dhyana—corresponding to the Middle Grade, Lower Birth. In the Pure Land, however, progressing from the lower grade to the middle grade may require tens or even hundreds of kalpas. Yet for sentient beings there, as there is no suffering, even longer durations are still imperceptible.

How then can one be reborn in the Middle Grade, Upper Birth or even the Upper Grade in the Pure Land or be reborn there as an Arhat?

There is still a way! First, you need to practice until attaining the Third Dhyana—or better still, the Fourth Dhyana. At this point, most people are unable to discern whether their meditation still contains joyfulness or self-attachment. They generally assume they've already attained the highest realms, making further transcendence exceedingly difficult.

At this point, you must fulfill a certain condition. When fulfilled, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva will dispatch a Dharma transmitter in the human realm to guide you. This guide is either a Bodhisattva or an Arhat. However, since they come to the human realm with karmic force, ordinary beings are unable to recognize their true nature.

The guide will approach you in the guise of an ordinary person—perhaps as a monastic, a layperson, a friend, or even a junior. In short, they will adopt the most accessible approach to connect with you and spend several years building trust with you.

When the guide feels the time is right, he will reveal his true identity and begin guiding your practice. How will he guide you? You cannot even discern the level you've reached by yourself!

He has a method. While you enter into dhyana, he will enter your consciousness and, through the use of his empowerment, allow you to experience the next dhyana realm. Then he will tell you which attachments you need to overcome at your current stage to progress to the next stage.

It is just like someone who has not been in contact with electricity can never comprehend the sensation. In this case, they let you briefly experience it to know.

This is called Mind-to-Mind Transmission! If I speak and you listen, this is merely the transmission through sound or written textual—completely unrelated to the Transmission from Mind to Mind. Through this method, they will guide you to the Dhyana of the Infinite Space.

When the Buddha was alive, he used this method to help many of his disciples attain to the realm of Arhat when they were still alive. Back then, most disciples were people with high level spiritual capacities, capable of attaining the fruit of Arhat in their lifetime.

But for people today, this is impossible!

However, we still have a card up one's sleeve! When you die and are freed from the constraints of the physical body, this person will sever all worldly ties for you. Using immense empowerment, they will immediately elevate your meditation level by two or three stages, bringing you to the level of Neither Perception nor Non-perception Dhyana, or even to the higher realm of Arhats.

At the same time, the consciousness of two individuals will merge into one, like two overlapping shadows, and pass into the Pure Land together. Amitabha Buddha in the Pure Land will also use his power to pull you up.

With someone pushing you from below and another pulling you from above, combined with your strong vow for rebirth in the Pure Land, you will successfully be reborn in the Pure Land as an Arhat. At the minimum, you will attain in the Upper Grade, Upper Birth!

That said, what are the conditions you must satisfy to encounter such a person?

You can't find them by yourself and must wait for them to approach you. The condition you need to meet is this: develop a great Bodhicitta and propagate the Dharma to liberate sentient beings through action, thereby continuing the Buddha's will.

Monastics have their own ways to propagate the Dharma, and lay practitioners also have their own methods. Whether you are a lay practitioner or a Buddhist monk, as long as you hold all sentient beings in your mind and put aside your own concerns for their benefits, you are qualified to encounter such a person and achieve Arhatship.

Many people isolate themselves in remote mountains to practice, reaching the Third or Fourth Dhyana but refusing to come out. When asked, they claim to possess a Great Bodhicitta. Unfortunately, without genuine action, the Great Bodhicitta remains merely an empty concept.

Here we have skillfully resolved all the foreshadowing given earlier, and I have now conveyed all the methods I can teach you.

To summarize: begin your practice by reciting the Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra and the Great Compassion Mantra to eliminate verbal thoughts. Recite the Buddha's name whenever you can, and begin practicing the Full Lotus Position without haste. Spend three to four years to open all your meridian channels to enter the Dhyana in the Desire Realm. From this stage, contemplate longing and advance through the stages to the Third Dhyana—if you can reach the Fourth Dhyana while you are young, even better. Then, making vows to help all sentient beings and actively propagating the Dharma to liberate others until the end of your life.

In this way, your life will be truly fulfilling. Even if you cannot attain Arhatship, you will still be reborn in the Pure Land!

Our guiding principles are: regard the Buddha as your father, take the precepts as your teacher; follow the Dharma teachings while counting on yourself, and practice diligently. Time is precious—let us all strive diligently! Amitabha Buddha!

Chapter 5: Guiding Junior Disciples in Practice

Section 01: Summary of Preliminary, Middle, and Advanced Stages of Practice

The process of practice from an ordinary person to an Arhat can be divided into three stages:

The first stage begins with the basics: keeping precepts to resolve karmic obstacles, sitting in Full Lotus Position to unblock the body's meridians, entering the Dhyana in the Desire Realm, and extinguishing sexual desire to enter the First Dhyana. At this point, the basic preparations for ascending toward the higher realms are considered completed, all of which belong to the preliminary stage of practice.

The progression from the First Dhyana to the Fourth Dhyana can be regarded as the middle stage of practice.

Starting from the Fourth Dhyana and achieving through the four kinds of Dhyana of the Formless Realm to become Arhats can be regarded as the advanced stage of practice.

In the preliminary stage of practice, unblocking the body's meridians is a significant challenge! Three years to achieve this from the start is not a long time—do not prioritize speed at this stage. The pace of extinguishing verbal thoughts and sexual desire should also be taken care of in a balanced way. Once you enter the Dhyana of the Desire Realm and reach the state of sitting in forgetfulness, you must awaken yourself as fast as you can! Prolonged immersion in this state may render your efforts fruitless so that you'll never achieve anything more in your lifetime. At this point, you can choose to recite the Buddha's name while observing the physical sensations in your body.

As for the upper stage of practice, it requires returned ones who have achieved liberation from samsara to direct mind-to-mind teachings—so we will not delve into that here. Instead, let us focus on the middle stage of practice.

When practicing, you must first clearly understand which attachments you are trying to extinguish. Only with this clarity can you set a defined goal, without which your practice becomes blind and aimless, mainly resulting in failure halfway.

Even if you are willing to offer money, finding someone who is willing to teach you the practice dharma of this stage is an extraordinary rarity. Across the planet's population of more than six billion, those who have attained the Fourth Dhyana or beyond can be counted in the hundreds.

Consider the fact that teachings related to the Fourth Dhyana are only preserved in mainland China, Taiwan, and Korea—nowhere else. Bodhisattvas and Arhats who have returned to this world maintain a very low profile. We also adhere to our principles—the supreme Dharma is not shared with those outside our lineage!

Anyone wishing to learn must first undergo rigorous tests. Not only must someone with Dharma Eye assess his spiritual capacity, but his character must also be evaluated. Only if his aspiration and integrity are deemed fit can the teachings be imparted.

Searching online often leads to information filled with nonsensical content. The authors of such materials themselves probably do not understand what they are talking about, just a bunch of wild guesses from a few eggheads, distorting the true meaning of the Buddha.

Therefore, your qualification to study the Buddha dharma here, pursue the truth and seek liberation from samsara, is due to the karmic meritss you cultivated in past lives. You are individuals who planted immense merit fields before Buddhas; otherwise, you could not have the chance to encounter such profound teachings.

My time in China is limited! The Dharma dissemination activities from the Pure Land have only 100 years remaining. Just think of it as a close-out sale before the doors shut, not even a sale, more like it's a free giveaway. Although people tend to devalue what is freely given, by this time the principle no longer holds weight.

To those fortunate enough to encounter these teachings, regardless of the current stage of your practice, it is best to document what you've learned here. It will serve as reference material for your future practice.

Does this sound boastful and difficult to accept? Once you've read through all these teachings, your understanding will lead to a sudden enlightenment!

My online teachings usually adopt a "question and answer" format. However, to date, no one has asked me about the practice beyond the First Dhyana. It is understandable! Buddhist monks with 20 years of practice may not completely extinguish sexual desire and enter the First Dhyana, let alone those practicing as lay Buddhists.

Thus, I will use my experience guiding junior disciples as a framework to provide a detailed explanation!

If some unbelievable material arises along the way, don't be surprised. From the perspective of heavenly beings, humans are akin to bacteria—bacteria cannot fathom how vast the world beyond them is!

There is a lot of content to cover, which will have to be divided into multiple posts. The earlier sections may not seem groundbreaking, but be patient. My time is limited, so this is the approach I have to take.

The introduction ends here. The next section will begin the main course.

Section 02: 100-meter Sprint vs. Marathon

This time, I brought two junior disciples to a secluded mountain temple for intensive meditation practice, and I also gained many insights from the experience!

(Note: From March 20 to May 31, 2014, Master Taguanglin guided two junior disciples, who had just graduated from the Buddhist Academy the previous year, for intensive meditation practice in a mountain temple. During this roughly three-month period, the master temporarily ceased disseminating the Dharma in Baidu's forum "Chanding-ba.")

Although the two disciples are still considered beginners, they have already practiced for over eight years.

For the first two years, they worked as attendants at the temple, while also being able to participate in Dharma assemblies and pursue their own practice. After two years of observation, they were tonsured and became novice monks. Then, they spent four years studying theories at the Buddhist Academy without neglecting their practice. Upon returning, they practiced under the Master's guidance, attending six hours of daily Buddha-worship, performing 1,000 prostrations in two hours, and sitting in meditation for two to three hours at night. After five years as novice monks, they received full Bhikkhu precepts and formally became a Buddhist monk and continued practicing. From this perspective, they've abstained from meat for over eight years, this barrier should be considered passed!

This time, our Master instructed me to guide them in the meditation room, where they would sit in meditation for 16 hours daily—it's an entirely new challenge!

The senior disciple is from a wealthy family and has already indulged in worldly pleasures, which helped him see through the mundane world and pursue liberation from samsara. He is in excellent health and has successfully unblocked his body's meridians during his time practicing under the Master, which made him quite proud.

The junior disciple, who had been frail and sickly since childhood, has seen remarkable improvement through eight years of practice and can now be considered as a normal guy. However, he had not yet fully unblocked his meridians when he started this retreat—but under my guidance, he succeeded as well.

Let's start the story from our arrival at the mountain!

During the first few days, I didn't make any requirements for them—I simply asked them to practice Zen regularly, eat on time, and sleep on schedule.

Before we entered the mountain, our Master instructed them to obey me completely, even in individual activities like eating and relieving themselves. Their daily life and practice had to follow orders, and those who disobeyed would be expelled from the temple, left to sink or swim on their own.

Therefore, the two disciples respected me as their foreign senior, knowing I wasn't a pushover—after all, the three of us had performed prostrations together for well over a year.

After about a week, the senior disciple just came and asked me, saying that his back of neck was getting stiff and his shoulders were starting to be sore during meditation. What's going on? He believed that since his meridians were already unblocked, longtime meditation should not cause problems.

I observed him briefly and replied: "Judging by your meditation posture, I can tell you won't last many days. Your sitting posture starts out stiffly upright, but after about an hour, you begin leaning forward

with your head drooping. This compresses the major artery at the front of your cervical spine. Over time, your neck will stiffen, followed by your shoulders and then your back. This stiffness will make breathing difficult, preventing you from entering into dhyana."

The senior disciple replied: "But I've already unblocked my meridians, and my Qi circulates very well! Why is this happening? When I meditated for two to three hours daily in the temple at the foot of the mountain, I never had such problems. Now I've only extended my meditation time—could there be some secret arcane truth?"

I replied: "Bro, is running a 100-meter sprint the same as a marathon? Sprinting requires explosive power, whereas marathon depends on endurance. And where does endurance come from? It comes from balance! Unblocking your meridians and keeping posture are two entirely different issues."

Meditating for over two hours daily is sufficient to unblock your meridians. During those two hours, as long as you maintain the Full Lotus Position, imperfections in other aspects of your posture are acceptable. Why? Because during a 24-hour day, apart from those two hours, what else are you doing? You're engaged in Buddha-worship for six hours, performing prostrations for two hours, and participate in labor, eat, and sleep.

This extended period of activity naturally eliminates any negative effects accumulated during your meditation.

But here, meditation occupies 16 hours of the day. In the remaining 8 hours, half is spent sleeping, while the rest is devoted to eating and resting, with no physical activity. If your posture has even a slight deviation, the negative impact compounded daily will overwhelm you within a month.

The elder disciple looked deeply worried, visibly shaken in confidence, and said: "I can't keep relying on sheer willpower to maintain my posture! My body cannot relax, nor can I enter into dhyana. But whenever I relax the body, I start leaning. What should I do? Could it be that my core strength isn't sufficient? I've been doing prostrations for over a year and a half—shouldn't that be enough?"

I smiled and said, "Heh, the problem isn't with your waist, but rather with…"

To know what happens next, stay tuned for the next episode.

Section 03: The Career Paths of Monks

I asked the senior disciple to bring the junior disciple over and said to them, "It isn't due to your waist or back that your body tilts forward, but due to your abdomen. Your abdominal muscles aren't large or strong enough to support the front of your torso, so your posture collapses. For one or two hours, you can rely on sheer willpower to stay upright, but with such long hours of meditation every day, you simply can't keep it up—you'll only wear out your body."

The two were puzzled and asked, "So does that mean we need to strengthen our abs by doing sit-ups?"

I replied, "While the size of your muscles is important, it's not everything. Before I explain further, I want to ask you—what plans do you have for your future?"

The two were taken aback and appeared bewildered.

Without beating around the bush, I told them, “As monks, there are three paths you can take.”

“The first path is the academic route. You can continue to deepen your studies at a Buddhist Academy, then travel and study in Southeast Asia—India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and other places. You’ll learn Theravada theories as well as Sanskrit and English. Afterward, you can return to the Buddhist Academy as a teacher. In 20 years, you could be great monks with countless students all over the world.”

“The second path is the public Buddhist teaching route. You can return to the master and learn how to manage and promote the Dharma—this is not an easy task, either! As long as you can preach the teachings of the Vehicle of Human and Deva via Merit and Virtue and put your heart into serving sentient beings, then in 20 years you could also become a renowned monk in your region. You might even become a government representative or committee member, regularly going in and out of the government offices, attending official or social events. You’ll likely gather a wide base of lay Buddhists, which will include many who are prosperous—ensuring you never have to worry about food, clothing, shelter and transportation. Both of these paths come with fame and fortune—they’re good options.”

“The third path is the ascetic path. That means taking a vow to attain the fruits of enlightenment in this very life, refusing to leave retreat until you achieve this goal. If you succeed before the age of 50, you can come out and teach Buddhist, just as our master did! The Master practiced asceticism for 20 years after he became a Buddhist monk, attained accomplishment, and then returned to take charge of the temple. After another 10 years, he is now highly regarded—this is the best outcome! But if you don’t achieve anything on this path, you’ll practice until death. This path is a one-way road, a path of no return. You must cross the Rubicon! If, at the age of 80 or 90, you have not made any major breakthroughs in your practice, your situation will be truly bleak—with no lay disciples to support you, nor your own temple to rely upon.”

“You are still young, so you need to think carefully about which path you want to take. My practice dharma requires a resolve to find life amidst death, so if you don’t have that kind of determination, there’s no point in learning it—it wouldn’t help you. However, the basics of this practice will still be taught. Whether you go out to teach pursue or academic work, you’d better have deeper insights than those outside.”

After hearing this, the two thought for a moment and expressed their resolve: both were willing to devote all their youth and effort to their practice.

I told the senior disciple, “Your family is well-off, so even if you choose the ascetic path, you’ll never have to worry about your basic needs. But if the junior brother grows old with no support, I hope you won’t forget the bond of brotherhood! The Master entrusted me to guide you both, and he surely discussed this with you as well.”

The two reaffirmed their resolve once again!

This part of my words might not be directly applicable to everyone, but I want you to know that not all monks choose to take the ascetic path.

Many people casually claim that most monks today lack genuine practice. But what about you? What level of attainment have you reached? Do you have the qualifications to disparage the Buddhist monk? The inheriting of Buddhist Dharma requires both scholars and monks who propagate the Buddhist to the public.

Buddhism in Korea is now being pushed to the brink by Christianity! From an airplane over Seoul, all you see are crosses—it looks like a vast cemetery. Monks have retreated to mountain temples to practice and are unwilling to come out and teach. Out of a population of 50 million, only 10 million Buddhists remain, while Christianity has gained 20 million followers in just 60 years.

China is relatively better off, with the government support for Buddhism. But even here, there are so many things that are incompatible with Buddhism—it's hard to put into words.

Section 04: Breathing and Supernatural Powers

I said, “Before I proceed, I need to check your physical condition.”

The junior disciple, accustomed to medical consultations, immediately extended both arms, assuming I would take his pulse.

I laughed and said, “What era is this—still taking the pulse? I don’t know traditional Chinese medicine, but I have a smartphone.”

I opened a heart rate monitoring app on my phone and asked them to check their heart rates. The junior disciple’s heart rate was over 70 beats per minute, within the normal range. The senior disciple’s heart rate was 60 beats per minute, indicating super physical condition. Then I showed them my result—35 beats per minute. Both of them were shocked!

I said, “Now let’s continue by checking your breathing.” I asked them to lie down, relax, and take a deep breath. The junior disciple’s abdomen rose to a degree typical for an ordinary person. The senior disciple’s upper abdominal muscles engaged in breathing, causing his abdomen to rise slightly higher than his chest. Then I showed them—my abdomen expanded far more than my chest, like a frog’s belly. It looked so exaggerated that it seemed abnormal, and once again, they were stunned!

I explained to them, “The junior disciple breathes about 20 times per minute, falling within the normal range. He breathes entirely with his chest, absorbing roughly 4% oxygen with each breath. The senior disciple is very healthy: he breathes fewer than 15 times per minute, with his upper abdominal muscles aiding his breath, letting him absorb about 6–7% oxygen in each breath. We all know that air contains 21% oxygen, how many times do you think I breathe per minute, and how much oxygen do I breathe each time?”

They both made wild guesses.

I told them, “I breathe fewer than five times per minute, and each breath absorbs over 16% of oxygen—and that’s without entering into dhyana! If I enter into dhyana, my breathing can stop entirely.”

They were astonished for the third time!

I explained, “Without medical training, you cannot comprehend the significance of such breathing and heart rates indicate. Let me show you something even more fascinating.”

I pulled up my shirt, revealing my abdominal muscles—lean but strengthened by years of prostration. Pointing to a section of the abdominal muscle in the center of my left side, I said, “I’m going to move just this section of muscle, leaving all the other muscles still.”

Through focused mental command, solely the targeted abdominal muscle began to contract and expand. Then I pointed to a muscle on the right side of my waist and said, “Now I’ll move just this one muscle, leaving all the others still.”

Again through precise mental command, only that muscle began to contract and expand.

Both of them were dumbfounded—they pulled up their shirts and tried to imitate me, but could only move all their abdominal muscles at once.

I said, “Don’t even try—this isn’t something ordinary people can do! I possess control over parts others wouldn’t even dare to imagine, but you must promise to keep it a secret.”

They both agreed, and I told them to watch my eyes.

I took a deep breath and blinked three times; with each blink, my pupils dilated further. After the third blink, my irises had almost disappeared, leaving only the black pupils and white sclera visible.

They were completely stunned, mouths hanging open. The junior disciple exclaimed, “Is this the legendary divine eyes?”

I replied, “No! In the sutras, this is called the flesh eye.”

“By channeling Qi to both eyes, blood is rapidly infused, instantly tripling eyesight. This extends viewing range threefold and widens the visual field greatly. Within a single breath, attention is ceased. As it dissipates, focus disappears, allowing simultaneous observation of everything within the visual field. Moreover, dynamic vision improves significantly. I can clearly track the flight paths of fast-moving insects up close. All movements appear slowed, like slow motion in a movie. In low light, I can still see all surrounding objects with clarity.”

The two stared in awe, practically drooling, and said, “That’s incredible! How do you do it?”

I added, “But this state can’t last over two minutes; after all, the eyeballs are organic tissue-prolonged congestion would harm them.”

“Moreover, you must not try this yourselves! The senior disciple has unblocked his meridians and can direct the flow of Qi, but the Qi in your bodies is mortal Yin Qi. If you blindly direct the flow of Qi into your eyes, it will only cause congestion, not enhance your eyesight. Worse still, if the capillaries in your eyes burst, it could cause real damage to your eyesight.”

“The Qi in my body is the Yang spirit true Qi obtained after entering the Fourth Dhyana. It is immensely powerful, and I can direct its flow in a single thought, with extremely refined control. Crucially, my blood carries triple the oxygen of normal humans. This enables me to flood my eyeballs with oxygen and glucose within safe pressure limits, instantly boosting eyesight.”

“A more practical application lies in the ears - using the same principle to engorge the ear cells with blood can multiply hearing acuity severalfold.”

"Currently, over thirty people are sitting in meditation in the meditation hall. Without entering into dhyana myself, I can tell just by listening to their breathing who can enter into dhyana, who cannot, and to which level of Dhyana the successful ones may attain."

"A practitioner must first develop deep understanding of the body, then attain subtle observation, and ultimately achieve refined control."

The two exclaimed in astonishment, "So clairvoyance and clairaudience aren't merely legends!"

Section 05: Breathing and High-Energy Blood

I began teaching the two disciples about practice and asked them a question: "How do humans breathe, and what do they use to breathe?"

The abrupt question confused them, but after a moment of thinking, they both replied, "We breathe with our nose and lungs."

I shook my head and said, "With that kind of understanding, you could sit in meditation for a thousand years and still get nowhere."

The two were stunned again!

I continued, "How humans breathe is something we all learned in school, yet we tend to overlook it. You need to pay close attention, because this is the gateway into Zen practice!"

"The lungs have no muscles, thus cannot actively contract or expand. They also lack pain nerves, so even if diseased, they cannot send warning signals. When we breathe, the intercostal muscles between the ribs first contract, lifting the ribcage upward. The major pectoral muscles on the chest wall govern body movement, not for breathing. Breathing depends on the intercostal muscles. Next, the diaphragm descends while the rib cage elevates, expanding the thoracic cavity's volume. This expansion reduces internal pressure below external atmospheric pressure. Air is then drawn into the lungs due to this pressure difference—that's inhalation."

"Exhalation is the reverse: the ribs press downward, and the diaphragm rises, pushing air out of the lungs. Therefore, breathing isn't accomplished by the nose—it's controlled by the ribcage and diaphragm working together."

"Now let's turn to oxygen.

How important is oxygen to us? If you stop breathing for five minutes, you'll likely ascend to heaven. The energy your body needs depends entirely on the reaction between oxygen and glucose. Glucose comes from the food you eat, while oxygen comes from breathing. Their reaction follows a chemical equation that produces energy, water, and carbon dioxide."

"To simplify the explanation, let's use basic units for comparison. An average adult male requires 2,000-2,500 kcal daily, whereas an adult female needs 1,500-2,000 kcal. Let's assume a person needs 20 units of energy. The body needs to consume 20 units of food and absorb 20 units of oxygen to produce those 20 units of energy—this is considered normal."

“But if your breathing efficiency is compromised and you can only absorb 18 units of oxygen, eating 20 units of food won’t help! You’ll still only produce 18 units of energy. The remaining 2 units of food will turn into waste, and the nutrients in them won’t be fully absorbed.”

“Moreover, processing and transporting that waste for excretion requires energy—let’s say it takes 1 unit of energy. This reduces the net available energy in your body to 17 units. That leaves you feeling physically tired and mentally drained.”

“You are ignorant and might think you’re lacking nutrients and eat even more food or supplements. But even if you eat 22 units of food, you still only absorb 18 units of oxygen. You’ll still only produce 18 units of energy, meanwhile generating 4 units of waste. Processing that waste takes 2 units of energy, leaving you with only 16 units of usable energy.”

“This creates a vicious cycle: the more you eat, the fatter you get, the weaker you become; and the weaker you feel, the more you eat. In the end, you become what’s called a “three-high” person—with high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and high cholesterol—and death won’t be far away.”

“A smart person might observe themselves and find that they wake up full of energy in the morning, with all their fatigue gone. So, they use sleep to recover. During sleep, not only are mental delusions minimized, but more importantly, the body enters a deeply relaxed state, and breathing naturally deepens, allowing for greater oxygen intake. With both body and mind at rest, most of the oxygen is directed to the viscera for detoxification and excretion. This is why after a good night’s sleep, you wake up energized—the key is oxygen!”

“Nowadays, as long as you eat three meals a day, you’re unlikely to have nutritional deficiencies—what you lack is oxygen. When the body lacks oxygen (anoxia), illness tends to arise first in organs with congenital deficiencies. Many inflammatory conditions—this “-itis” or that—often begin with anoxia. Thus, oxygen is the first and best medicine! If you take in enough oxygen, many illnesses will heal naturally.”

“When you inhale sufficient oxygen, the amount of oxygen in your blood increases. Oxygen needs glucose to react.

Where is glucose concentration highest? Precisely in the small intestine cells! During continuous intestinal digestion, the small intestine cells primarily obtain ample glucose. When oxygen reaches them, these cells are activated, start metabolizing efficiently, and generate heat. You’ll feel warmth in your lower abdomen (Dantian) and mistake it for Qi sensation in your Dantian.”

“Activated small intestine cells enhance digestive efficiency, facilitating glucose absorption and subsequent release into circulation. Blood rich in oxygen and glucose starts flowing into the limbs. The cells in the limbs receive sufficient glucose and oxygen, become activated, begin metabolizing efficiently, and generate heat. You’ll feel warmth in your arms and legs and think that Qi is circulating through your limbs.”

“The blood then returns to the lungs to pick up more oxygen, gets pumped by the heart, and absorbs glucose from the small intestine.

Which four organs constitute the essential circulatory pathway? One of them is the kidneys, where blood is filtered. When blood rich in oxygen and glucose reaches the kidneys, the kidney cells are activated, start metabolizing efficiently, and generate heat—you might feel a Qi sensation in your kidneys."

"The kidneys filter the blood with higher quality. At this point, the blood not only contains abundant oxygen and glucose but has also removed waste and become purified. This type of blood is what we call high-energy blood."

"The kidneys are directly connected to both the abdominal aorta and inferior vena cava in front of the spine. Once the high-energy blood leaves the kidneys, it starts moving through the abdominal aorta and inferior vena cava. This has nothing to do with the direction of blood flow! Even if a liquid flows one way, a drop of ink in it can still spread in the opposite direction. As long as the flow isn't too fast, it can move upstream."

"As high-energy blood ascends through the abdominal aorta and inferior vena cava in front of your spine, you'll feel a warm flow rising along the back—you might think that Qi is flowing through the Du Meridian."

"Wherever the high-energy blood reaches, the cells in that area become activated and start generating heat. If any cells are damaged or diseased, you'll feel pain there. The oxygen and glucose in the high-energy blood are pumped into those damaged cells for self-repair. Once the repairs are completed, the high-energy blood keeps moving upward."

"The Yuzhen acupoint constitutes a vital acupoint in human anatomy. When high-energy blood breaks through the Yuzhen acupoint, it'll cause a wave of pain."

"When high-energy blood enters the brain, brain cells are activated. Instantly, your mind clears up and you feel a surge of energy."

"High-energy blood arrives at the forehead. There aren't any major straight-up-and-down blood vessels in the face, and the eyes are essentially a product of highly focused attention. High-energy blood splits along two paths, flowing into both eyes before converging at the Renzhong acupoint (philtrum). From the philtrum, it then descends directly into the chest via the esophagus and trachea, reaching the Tanzhong acupoint (center of the chest)."

"The Tanzhong acupoint is the most important Qi gate. Once it's cleared, everything below becomes easy."

"The high-energy blood passes through the lungs to replenish oxygen, gains pumping power from the heart, and flows through the Tanzhong acupoint, returns to the small intestine to absorb more glucose, and then descends to the testicles, where testicle cells are activated, and you feel a warm sensation in the testicles."

"The testicles are responsible for producing male hormones. When functioning optimally, the testicles generate substantial quantities of male hormones. With this, men feel as if they've been injected with a stimulant—becoming energized, with even white hair turning black."

"For women, the same principle applies: activated ovaries produce large quantities of female hormones. The first noticeable change appears in the skin, which becomes smooth and hydrated; while the breasts regain youthful firmness and lift."

"The high-energy blood continues downward, breaks through the Huiyin Acupoint, returning to the area between the kidneys, thus completing one cycle of the Macrocosmic Orbit. Each cycle brings the high-energy blood into the brain, refreshing the consciousness anew. After three or four cycles, with the consciousness repeatedly refreshed, and then you suddenly enter the realms of dhyana!"

"Everyone must understand clearly: dhyana is attained when consciousness becomes increasingly lucid and fully alert! It's absolutely not a state of mental dullness or drowsiness—such conditions indicate brain cell damage, and prolonged exposure can lead to brain damage."

"Now everyone understands where the early sensations of Qi come from—it's high-energy blood! And how does high-energy blood come about? By breathing in plenty of oxygen."

"So, how can you breathe in enough oxygen to produce high-energy blood?

To find out the details, stay tuned for the next installment!"

Section 06: The Correct Breathing Method

We previously discussed the basic principles of breathing and the role of oxygen in clearing the Meridians. Now, let's talk about the kind of breathing required for practice.

I asked the two disciples, "Can you remember anything from your past lives?"

Both of them shook their heads.

I said, "To understand the breathing, we need to trace back to the moment of birth. If you could recall the moment of your birth, you'd fully grasp how this breathing should be done."

When we were in our mother's womb, we were immersed in 36-degree Celsius amniotic fluid, receiving nutrients and oxygen directly through the umbilical cord from mother. But once leaving the mother's body, we suddenly entered an unfamiliar environment. The first shock was the temperature—the outside temperature was much lower than 36 degrees, and it felt like being plunged into a freezing refrigerator.

Then came the towel wrapping; you have to understand how delicate an infant's skin is. That towel feels like a giant blanket of needles, causing unbearable pain throughout the body. However, the cold and pain are still minor issues!

The umbilical cord was cut, cutting off the oxygen supply. Consider this—it was a truly life-threatening crisis! Brain cells start deteriorating after only 30 seconds without oxygen. Death, at that point, is frighteningly near.

At this moment, the brain makes a final struggle before death, issuing simultaneous commands to all nerves. All the cells in the body are mobilized to achieve the first great feat in life—breathing!

The nerves in the back send signals to the back muscles, which contract and cause the spine to arch forward—not backward into a hunchbacked posture, but forward to protrude the abdomen.

The nerves in the anterior body send signals to the abdominal muscles.—note that an infant's intercostal muscles between the ribs are not yet fully developed, so they cannot lift the chest. An infant can only perform abdominal breathing—all the abdominal muscles, along with the waist muscles, expand together, puffing up the belly into a rounded shape.

The infant also vigorously shakes its limbs to accelerate blood circulation and assist the expansion of abdominal muscles.

Observe an infant's belly. At this stage, all the abdominal muscles and their connected nerves are active. Through vigorous crying, the infant expels fluid from the lungs and takes its first breath of air.

If this initial breath is not completed promptly, the infant will die prematurely.

However, as we grow older, our breathing gradually shifts to chest-based breathing. The abdominal muscles and their connecting nerves become underused, beginning to atrophy and enter a semi-dormant state.

The goal of breathing practice is to regain the natural breathing sensation we experienced as infants, utilizing all the muscles and nerves throughout the torso to achieve a more perfect form of breathing, thus supplying the body with sufficient oxygen.

Now, look at how we breathe today: the chest lifts while the diaphragm descends—these two movements facilitate inhalation.

Most normal people only use about 40% of their lung capacity, breathing 18–20 times per minute, with each inhalation containing 4–5% oxygen.

To inhale more oxygen, we need to lift the chest （ribcage） more and lower the diaphragm as much as possible. However, since the chest is structurally connected to the spine, its elevation capacity is naturally limited. This leaves us no choice but to concentrate on optimizing diaphragmatic movement.

We need to make the diaphragm descend as much as possible. Lowering it by just one centimeter allows for correspondingly more air intake. However, below the diaphragm are organs like the stomach and other internal organs—and they certainly won't just get out of the way on their own!

So, what should we do?

First: create more space for the internal organs—this means opening up the abdominal muscles and expanding the abdomen. The more the abdomen expands, the lower the internal organs sink, allowing the diaphragm to drop further and creating greater space in the chest cavity.

Does that mean we should train our abdominal muscles? If you can't even do ten sit-ups, then even if your abdominal muscles expand, it won't make much difference! That's why we practice prostrations—they help strengthen and enlarge the abdominal muscles.

Second: reduce the total volume of the viscera. How? By eating less and losing weight! Your intestines contain fat and retained feces. Exercise more to burn off the fat. Also, eliminate the retained feces, practice dietary restraint, and develop the habit of emptying the bowels after meals.

Those who are serious about their practice make significant efforts in controlling their diet.

The Buddha said to "purify food with fire." Why? Raw vegetables and fruits produce a lot of gas during digestion, causing abdominal distension that interferes with your breathing.

During meditation retreats, we also avoid grains like rice and wheat. Why? Grains produce large, hard stools after digestion. When practicing abdominal breathing, all your internal organs move along with your abdomen, but the large and hard stools inside could obstruct normal movement.

Minimize the volume of viscera while fully expanding the abdominal muscles, creating maximal space for diaphragm movement—this is our essential practice! Additionally, the goal of this breathing practice is to completely replace your habitual chest-based breathing. Abdominal breathing should be practiced all the time, not just during meditation.

I told the two disciples, "Starting tomorrow, stop meditating in the afternoon and evening. Instead, do 1,000 prostrations in the afternoon to train your abdominal muscles."

The next day, after lunch and an hour of rest, the three of us went to the side hall to perform prostrations. I instructed them to focus on reciting the Buddha's name during prostrations. Additionally, when rising, they were to lift the perineum and contract the anus, while engaging the lower abdomen.

Some people blindly practice abdominal breathing and overdo it, which can actually strain the intestines and leads to hemorrhoids. To prevent this accident, I instructed them to strengthen their anal muscles.

After finishing the prostrations, take a short rest before commencing breathing practice. For beginners, it's best to practice while standing. Sitting while practicing often leads to a lack of focus, and before long, you might drift into sleep—which can lead to death. Therefore, standing practice is the most suitable method for beginners.

Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart, relaxing your entire body, and inhale. When inhaling, let your abdomen expand—or, more precisely, expand the abdomen to draw air into your lungs.

Inhale through your nose, not your mouth, as the nasal cavity contains mucous membranes that filter particulates, humidify the air, and protect the lungs from damage.

Don't force yourself into over-deep breathing; inhale until it feels just right, and then increase the intake by another 20%. Forcing your breath recklessly can damage the lungs.

Exhale immediately after inhaling without any pause. To enhance the exhalation process, softly pronounce "s～～～" while lightly clenching your teeth and pressing your tongue against your lower teeth, releasing air through the gaps. This prolongs the exhalation and keeps both your abdominal and waist muscles tense, allowing thorough exercise to strengthen them.

After exhaling, allow a natural pause of a few seconds—don't interfere, let your physical body decide the timing.

This breathing practice cannot be rushed, and you should pay close attention to how you feel in your head. If you experience sensations of head distension or dizziness, stop immediately, resume normal breathing to recover, and only continue once you're back to a comfortable state.

The junior disciple was still relatively weak. After a few rounds of breathing, he experienced dizziness. I told him to pause for recovery before continuing and reminded him not to push himself recklessly.

After practicing for two weeks, both disciples demonstrated a noticeable improvement in their breathing quality.

In the third week, the training intensity was increased. The number of prostrations remained the same, but breathing practice shifted from standing to slow walking. When walking, the body requires more oxygen, forcing the lungs to absorb increased levels of oxygen. If negative reactions occur, one should recover fully before continuing the practice.

An average person utilizes only 40% of lung capacity for breathing, absorbing 4-5% oxygen per inhalation. Our goal is to activate 100% of lung capacity, which increases oxygen absorption to around 10%. In addition, we aim to upgrade lung cell efficiency so that each cell absorbs oxygen at least 1.5 times more effectively than the average person.

After another week, the junior disciple, who had initially struggled to keep pace, finally caught up to the walking practice speed.

We further increased the difficulty by quickening the walking practice. After a month of practice, the two disciples had essentially mastered abdominal breathing, practicing it not only during sitting meditation but throughout daily activities.

The senior disciple had also resolved his forward-leaning posture issue—breathing practices helped strengthen his abdominal muscles. By incorporating abdominal breathing into daily life, his abdominal muscles became sufficiently developed to support his torso upright, eliminating any forward leaning.

The next section will cover the various phenomena and their causes that are encountered during breathing training and meditation practice.

For individuals who have undergone cesarean section—practitioners must avoid abdominal incisions! For proper breathing, chest pressure needs to be lower than atmospheric pressure for air to enter the lungs; likewise, abdominal pressure must be lower than chest pressure for the diaphragm to descend smoothly. However, abdominal surgery causes the abdominal pressure to equalize with external atmospheric pressure, which makes proper breathing significantly harder later on.

You should perform more prostrations to sweat out trapped air in your abdomen. Additionally, drink plenty of Pu'er tea—it doesn't have to be expensive; any tea will suffice. Drinking large quantities will

dissolve trapped air into the tea, aiding its release from the body. Also, practice abdominal breathing in a standing position.

Prepare for prolonged practice—persevere! Remaining questions will be answered later.

Section 07: Oxygen Uptake

Continuing from the previous section!

Now, let's calculate the amount of oxygen absorbed during breathing.

The average person uses 40% of their lungs to breathe and absorbs 4–5% oxygen per breath, while breathing 18–20 times per minute. Let's say you inhale 40 units of air per breath. Multiply that by 5%, and you absorb 2 units of oxygen per breath. Multiply this by 20 breaths, and you absorb 40 units of oxygen per minute.

If you fully activate your lungs and use 100% of their capacities for breathing, then you'd inhale 100 units of air per breath. At this rate, you'd absorb 10% oxygen per breath, or 10 units of oxygen. With just four breaths, you'd reach the oxygen absorption level of an average person in one minute.

If you breathe 10 times per minute, you'd absorb 100 units of oxygen—this calculation doesn't even take into account the increased oxygen absorption capacities of upgraded lung cells!

When you inhale 70 units of oxygen per minute, your body will start generating heat—starting from your lower abdomen and gradually diffusing throughout the entire body. When your entire body warms up, it means your cells are undergoing rapid self-repair. This sensation of warm up can occur even when you're not meditating.

Does this mean that simply activating all your lung cells and using 100% of your lungs for breathing can ensure sufficient oxygen absorption? Not exactly! Your oxygen absorption capability is not determined by how much of your lungs are activated, but by your blood's ability to transport oxygen.

Oxygen is carried by hemoglobin in the blood. Your blood must contain sufficient hemoglobin to absorb more oxygen—this involves the issue of blood purification. You need to exercise more and sweat more to expel toxins from your blood. The cleaner your blood is, the higher your hemoglobin levels will be.

Many people cannot give up eating meat. So what happens when you do eat meat? Let's put aside karma for now—but just focus on the physiological changes. Meat is much harder to digest than vegetables. If you eat meat, your stomach must secrete stronger gastric acid to digest it.

An increase in the acidity of gastric acid will also lead to an increase in the acidity of your blood. This acidic blood would destroy a significant amount of hemoglobin, thereby sharply reducing the amount of oxygen your blood can absorb.

When your brain lacks oxygen, it creates a sensation of fatigue, urging you to sleep earlier. This allows your breathing quality to improve during sleep to absorb more oxygen.

Acidic blood entering the brain also affects your emotions, making you irritable and quick to anger. So if you eat meat, you cannot significantly increase your oxygen absorption capacity. For someone who

still eats meat, being able to enter the Dhyana in the Desire Realm is already quite good—there is simply no way to advance any further.

Therefore, abstaining from eating meat and exercising enough to sweat are essential! Otherwise, relying on breathing practice alone cannot increase your oxygen absorption capacity.

Section 08: Physical Phenomena That Arise During Breathing and Sitting Meditation

This information is very important, so it's best to write it down. Otherwise, it'll be problematic if you can't find the cause when problems arise later, These insights are gained from my many years of sitting meditation in Zen hall, observing many practitioners, and communicating with them. They are both important and precious.

There are no shortcuts in practice—only hard work! To receive the instruction of a true spiritual guidance is the result of great merit cultivated in past lives. I hope everyone cherishes such Predestined Dharma Ties!

Let's examine the phenomena that occur during breathing and sitting meditation together!

During sitting meditation, your breath naturally becomes deeper, similar to practicing breathing while standing. Leg pain during sitting meditation is inevitable! It indicates that your body is not in good condition and your viscera have problems, though not yet to a degree detectable by medical instruments. Enduring this pain is an unavoidable hurdle you must experience ; it is the karmic result of not taking proper care of your body.

Let's begin with the good phenomena!

After sitting meditation or practicing breathing long enough, your body may begin to generate heat, starting from the lower abdomen and gradually spreading—this is a good sign as mentioned earlier.

You may feel an itch on your back or face—this is the result of capillaries expanding in the affected areas and stimulating the nerves. It indicates that your body is absorbing more oxygen than usual. You may scratch the itch- it is fine, just make sure you don't break the skin.

You may hear your stomach growling—this is a sign that your digestive system is regaining health, which is also good! Passing gas is good as well; gas forms during digestion, and releasing it prevents bloating.

Your mouth may begin producing large amounts of saliva—this is also a good sign! When the nerve associated with the Du Meridian is activated, it stimulates the nerves responsible for saliva secretion, producing light, flavorless saliva.

When the Ren Meridian nerves are activated, the saliva secreted in the mouth becomes thicker and slightly astringent. These are good signs that the Central Meridian is about to be opened up. However, some will only produce light, flavorless saliva.

Do not spit out your saliva—it is a high-energy substance, and spitting it out excessively will weaken your body. The Surangama Sutra mentions a type of immortal who practice by continually swallowing saliva.

One way to determine if someone has opened up the Central Meridian is to observe their saliva production. Monks who worship the Buddha and chant continuously for 90 to 120 minutes will not feel thirsty if their Central Meridians are clear, because their saliva remains abundant. Those who have not cleared it will feel as if their mouths were burning.

When you watch a senior monk give a Dharma talk for 90 minutes, if he keeps drinking water throughout, it means he hasn't even opened the Central Meridian. You can use this as a way to gauge someone's level of attainment.

In the first two months of practice, many positive reactions may occur: hair loss stops, hair becomes shinier, sleep quality improves, eyesight partially recovers, and sexual desire increases—all these changes are good signs!

Now, let's talk about the negative phenomena!

This is extremely important and tied closely to practice! You couldn't learn this anywhere, even if you paid for it.

① When you first begin breathing practice, you may experience abdominal breathing in reverse—that is, the abdomen pulls inward when you inhale and expands when you exhale. This happens because you are still exerting effort in the chest and, for the moment, cannot break the habit of chest breathing. Lifting the chest during inhalation pulls on the abdominal muscles, making them tighten and contract. You should correct this habit as soon as possible. Place your attention on the abdomen and let it expand; the air will enter the lungs on its own. Don't concern yourself with the chest. In any case, reverse abdominal breathing is still better than chest breathing.

② If you keep exerting force while breathing—straining to expand and forcefully contracting your abdominal muscles—you may feel extremely fatigued after practice, even experiencing neck pain. This is because such forceful effort consumes a significant amount of energy. You only need to increase your breath by about 20%; don't push yourself too hard!

③ While practicing breathing or during sitting meditation, you might feel pressure in your head or experience bloodshot eyes. This occurs when you inhale excessively, which raises pulmonary pressure and causes air to flow in and out excessively. At this point, the parasympathetic nervous system in your brain may perceive your breathing as a problem and send signals to slow blood circulation and block peripheral nerves. As a result, the blood that can't flow to the extremities rushes to the brain, leading to bloodshot eyes, head pressure, and headaches.

If you focus your attention on your head during sitting meditation—putting effort into that area—the phenomenon of Qi and blood surging upward will occur even faster. Therefore, whether you're meditating or practicing breathing, you should avoid focusing on any areas above the Tanzhong point (center of the chest).

Another situation is when you neither focus on your head nor forcefully practice breathing, yet still feel pressure in your head and bloodshot eyes. This happens when your body is in poor condition—with poor abilities to absorb oxygen in the lungs and to transport oxygen in the blood. Under such physical conditions, your breathing slows when you practice sitting meditation or breathing and you cannot absorb sufficient oxygen. The brain, in response to a lack of oxygen, signals the heart to raise blood pressure to send more blood to the brain. This results in these symptoms. This is also why non-practitioners who suffer from oxygen deficiency frequently experience migraines. Ultimately, this is all caused by a lack of oxygen. Engage in physical exercise to strengthen your heart and lungs and purify your blood—it will get better.

④ You may experience heart palpitations or a rapid heartbeat, which could occur during or after sitting meditation or breathing practice. This is caused by excessive exhalation, which disrupts the proper balance of gasses in your blood, thereby affecting your heart's normal function.

The most dangerous phenomenon occurs during sitting meditation: you might feel your consciousness becoming hazy, your awareness seemingly spreading into space, accompanied by drowsiness and even beautiful hallucinations. This is a deadly sign! Many people mistakenly perceive this state as dhyana, but if you continue, you're essentially preparing to see the King of Hell Yama!

Thus, this phenomenon must be analyzed in greater detail for everyone to clearly understand.

First, let's take a look at our bodies. Our body is an incredibly sophisticated instrument, operating with highly complex but rigid mechanisms. Whenever anything is pushed too far, the body immediately reacts against it.

Next, let's talk about the brain. The brain not only controls all the body's physical movements but also regulates the proper functioning of the internal organs and respiration.

Each time we breathe, the brain monitors how much oxygen is inhaled and how much carbon dioxide is exhaled. The air contains 20.98% oxygen, 0.04% carbon dioxide, and 78% nitrogen. During breathing, oxygen enters the bloodstream while carbon dioxide is exchanged out. For an average person undergoing monitoring, the data is as follows: oxygen is 20.98% for inhalation and 16.4% for exhalation; carbon dioxide is 0.04% for inhalation and 4.8% for exhalation.

When the carbon dioxide you exhale exceeds 7%, your blood would become alkaline. The brain detects this abnormal breathing— a significant change in the levels of various gases in the blood—and sends commands to the nervous system throughout the body to stop this harmful breathing pattern.

The heart starts to contract, so do the blood vessels. The nerves of the large intestine are connected to the lungs. In traditional Chinese medicine, both the large intestine and the lungs belong to the metal element—they function in coordination. The large intestine contracts, preventing stool from moving downward.

Stool generates a large amount of gas, causing the entire large intestine to swell upwards and press against the diaphragm. Even the stomach stops its peristaltic movement. The upward pressure makes breathing difficult, and other viscera begin to shut down. You may feel your heartbeat speed up, your body become stiff, your temperature drop, and soreness spread throughout your entire body.

When carbon dioxide is excessively exhaled while insufficient oxygen is supplied to the brain, your consciousness becomes hazy, and hallucinations begin to appear. You may feel as though you are wandering in a celestial realm, you even become absorbed in these hallucinations, unaware of the significant changes occurring in your body.

Your brain cells will start to suffer damage, and the corresponding organs and muscles in your body will develop functional impairments. In severe cases, this results in brain damage, that is, mental illness. To others, it'll appear as though you've gone insane due to improper practices.

Remember! Dozing off during practice can be deadly. If you're truly tired, lie down and go to sleep. Resume meditation only after you're fully awake! As previously mentioned, dhyana is entered when the mind is extremely refreshing and clear. I've explained this in detail—if anything goes wrong, I won't take responsibility for them!

Let's continue listing some of the less common negative phenomena as well!

⑤ If you experience back pain, stiffness in the back of the neck, or headaches—this is caused by excessive breathing. Activating all of your lungs shouldn't be rushed. The lungs are already under more pressure than usual, and forcing the breath will injure the lower lung cells that have not yet been activated. These lung cells then press against the major nerves near the spine, causing soreness throughout the back, which gradually spreads upward to the cervical spine and eventually to the brain.

When this occurs, stop practicing and return to normal breathing patterns to alleviate the discomfort. You can also hold your breath and then do abdominal exercises—that is, contracting and expanding the abdomen. The pain will subside quickly.

⑥ If you feel cold during sitting meditation or practicing breathing—this happens because your body secretes a hormone that constricts your blood vessels. In addition, you might also experience abdominal bloating but be unable to pass gas. When this happens, stop practicing and go perform prostrations instead! Your body isn't ready for such practices or for sitting meditation yet. Focus on strengthening your heart and lungs through exercise, then improve your physical constitution before going back to sitting meditation or breathing practice.

⑦ Women should not practice breathing exercises during menstruation. Otherwise, breathing practice would increase menstrual blood flow—losing too much blood will leave you weak! Regular sitting meditation is fine during this period.

⑧ When you practice to a certain level, your body will tremble on its own—similar to the slight shudder men get when urinating. This is a good sign! Each shudder relaxes your body a little more.

⑨ When your Dantian (lower abdomen) begins to feel warm, stop forcing yourself to practice breathing—this could harm your intestines! Simply observe and allow your body to breathe naturally.

According to statistics, a person breathes about six hundred million times over an eighty-year lifespan. Based on the principle of life's total capacity, if you improve the quality of your breathing and lengthen each breath, you can quite possibly live a healthy life ten to twenty years longer.

And to those who enjoy discussing theories—don't waste your time arguing about the Dharma with someone like me! Concepts such as Realizing the Mind and Seeing the Nature, the Three Dharma Seals, or the Three Passes won't get you anywhere if you rely only on book learning. Practice is not about talking; it is about lived effort.

As mentioned earlier, in the eyes of the heavenly kings, humans are like bacteria—so what about the higher realms above them? I am now teaching you the Fourth Dhyana. What kind of realms do you think the Fourth Dhyana belongs to? From a human perspective, heavenly beings seem like gods. Entering the First Dhyana, Second Dhyana, and up to the Fourth Dhyana through practice is a process of evolving toward the divine.

If you just engage in empty talks all day instead of real practice, you are nothing more than bacteria. When you die, you will reincarnate as bacteria once more. Even worse, you'll be brainwashed, lose your memory, and the little theoretical knowledge you had will be erased.

I will tell you a hard criteria: you can test it just with a watch. If your heartbeat exceeds 50 beats per minute and your breathing exceeds 10 breaths per minute, you have not yet reached the realms where you can discuss the Dharma with others, nor do you have the insight to recognize others' realms. For now, just recite the Buddha's name earnestly and practice sitting meditation diligently.

Decades will pass in the blink of an eye! When you die and stand before Yama, the King of Hell, you will suddenly realize that you were nothing but a pitiful bacterium. At that point, it will be too late to say anything. Reciting your book knowledge before Yama is useless—he does not accept such things. He'll simply send you wherever your karma dictates.

Section 09: Prajna Paramita

Both disciples were performing well in their sitting meditation practice, yet they never gave up their daily prostration and breathing exercises. After all, their cultivation was still at an early stage and needed solidifying.

During sitting meditation, I instructed them to contemplate great questioning. This is the most common method, yet very few people actually practice it. Holding onto the emotion of great questioning without letting go for hours or even days is not an easy task.

After a week, the senior disciple came up with another issue. He said he was no longer contemplating great questioning but had now begun contemplating Prajna Paramita.

I thought to myself, "This guy certainly has many ideas!" I asked him, "You mean the Prajna Paramita mentioned in the Heart Sutra, right? If that's the case, tell me—what is Prajna Paramita like?"

He replied, "The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra explains it: achieving emptiness, formlessness, and wishlessness—that is Prajna Paramita."

I said, “You’re right—you’ve read the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, and it does say that. But now, look at the Heart Sutra: ‘The bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, while deeply practicing Prajna Paramita, perceived the five aggregates to be empty.’ How do you explain the five aggregates?”

The disciple proceeded to recite the explanations he had learned in the Buddhist Academy.

I responded, “Your understanding is entirely wrong! Such theories are merely the speculations of bookworms at their desks. Your interpretation of Prajna Paramita is also mistaken. If you are able to understand it, the Heart Sutra would need to be rewritten to say, ‘When ordinary people deeply practice Prajna Paramita, they perceive the five aggregates as empty and surpass all suffering.’”

The disciple looked puzzled and asked, “Then how should the five aggregates and Prajna Paramita be interpreted?”

I answered, “We must start with the origin of the Three Realms, and it cannot be explained in just one or two sentences. Bring the junior disciple here as well. If you both can grasp this principle, liberation from samsara will not be far off.”

What followed was the explanation of the Three Realms, which I had already discussed in detail earlier, so I won’t repeat it. However, the focus lies in what comes next—the detailed evolution from the Heaven of Infinite Space to the realm of the First Dhyana. Previously, I merely touched on these ideas briefly, and you should go over it again. I didn’t intend to write out the core principles of these four Dhyana. Without understanding this, it is impossible to enter the Fourth Dhyana.

(Note: What follows is Master Taiguanglin’s explanation of the formation of the universe, which corresponds to “The Eighteen Heavens of the Realm of Form” in Chapter 1, Section 2)

After finishing the explanation of the universe’s formation, both disciples seemed bewildered, finding the path of true practice vastly distant and on a completely different level from what they had learned in the Buddhist Academy.

I continued explaining the five aggregates—“form”, “sensation”, “perception”, “mental formation”, and “consciousness”.

—“Consciousness” refers to the delusions of bodhisattvas;

—“Mental formation” refers to the discriminating minds of arhats;

—“Perception” refers to the attachments of ordinary beings;

—“Sensation” refers to feelings, the five senses;

—“Form” encompasses worldly phenomena, the physical body, and the surrounding space .

In Buddhist terminology, this refers to the five sense faculties and the five sensory objects.

In the earlier explanation of the five aggregates, I referred to “sensation” as comprising the five sense faculties and feelings—that was merely a convenient teaching! Now, the five sense faculties are placed under the Form Skandha, leaving “sensation” solely as feelings, corresponding to the five senses. Therefore, the five aggregates collectively refer to all forms of delusions.

And Prajna Paramita should correspond to these five aggregates. In the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, it is stated that Prajna Paramita is characterized by emptiness, formlessness, and wishlessness. Emptiness corresponds to the delusions of bodhisattvas—having delusions is called ignorance, while the absence of delusions is called emptiness. Formlessness corresponds to the discriminating minds of arhats—having discrimination is called having form, while the absence of discrimination is called formlessness. Wishlessness corresponds to the attachments of ordinary beings—having attachments is called having wish, while the absence of attachments is called wishlessness.

Disciple, you said emptiness means not actively generating delusions, while actively generated delusions are known as verbal thoughts. In sutras, having verbal thoughts are referred to as thought, while the absence of verbal delusions is called thoughtlessness.

You said formlessness means not generating delusions due to the external world, while delusions induced by the external world correspond to attention. For example, if there's a sound outside, your attention rises to focus on that sound. In sutras, having attention is called remembrance, while the absence of attention is called forgetfulness. When we say that meditation enters the state of sitting in forgetfulness, it means the body feels relaxed to the extent that you no longer perceive the body's existence. This temporary cessation of attention is referred to as sitting in forgetfulness.

You said wishlessness means not craving anything. Are you capable of achieving wishlessness? The human body itself is a product of wish. Try keeping your eyes open for a few minutes—won't you have a wish to blink? Or hold your breath for a few minutes—won't you have a wish to breathe?

Even the most basic actions like breathing and blinking arise from the wish before the action occurs. Let alone other things! When you sit in meditation, you first have the wish then decide to meditate—that wish is the attachment of an ordinary person! In sutras, having attachments is called grasping, while the absence of attachments is called letting go.

What then is Prajna Paramita? It is the state without delusion, discrimination, and attachment. When Avalokitesvara deeply practices Prajna Paramita, it means entering into a state free from delusion, discrimination, and attachment, thereby perceiving that the five aggregates are empty.

We chant the Heart Sutra and worship the Buddha daily in the temple, yet you still don't understand what the Heart Sutra truly teaches—this is the reality.

The Heart Sutra is a condensed version of the entire Eighty Thousand Tripitaka. Its first sentence encapsulates the entirety of the Dharma, while the remaining parts merely embellish it. Without genuine practice and actual realization, reciting scriptures over and over merely creates interpretations based on one's own limited, mundane wisdom as an ordinary being—better to practice meditating sincerely and diligently!

What you're entering now is merely the state of self-forgetfulness and serene bliss, but you're mistaking it for Prajna Paramita! Dhyana is entered with full clarity of mind, and you are acutely aware of everything that you're doing.

Your ears must hear sounds, your skin must feel the friction against your clothing, your eyes must perceive the darkness before them, and your nose must sense its breathing. You must be clearly aware of all these sensations—that is true dhyana!

If you stay trapped in the state of serene bliss, the longer it lasts, the harder it is to awaken.

From now on, mentally recite the Buddha's name while practicing sitting meditation—don't let the recitation stop, even if you find it bothersome. Also, now that spring has begun, it's still relatively cold in the mountains. When you practice sitting meditation, don't wear an undershirt. You should fully experience the cold while simultaneously reciting the Buddha's name.

As long as you sit for a while, your Qi will begin to circulate, and your body will generate heat. You must simultaneously sense both the warm flow within your body and the cold sensation on your skin, while also reciting the Buddha's name—all these actions must occur simultaneously.

In the afternoon, continue with prostrations and breathing practices, and make sure to keep mentally reciting the Buddha's name without stop at the same time. This practice will help you quickly awaken from the state of serene bliss.

Also, don't go making up your own methods or try to be clever when it comes to Dharma practice! I have been through everything you can think of—and it's all a waste of time! You might get stuck halfway before you know it, developing physical problems without even realizing them.

The Master instructed me to teach you so that you don't stray from the right path! Look at the monks meditating in the Zen hall now—how many of them are practicing by the proper methods? Some have fallen into a state of serene bliss that is essentially no different from sleeping—you can tell from the way they breathe! People in that state breathe very similarly to those who are asleep.

That's all for today!

And to everyone: don't purposely wait for me to publish new posts—it's a waste of your life! Posts will remain available, and you can read them at any time; there's no need to follow live updates.

Set a schedule for your internet use from now on: if you spend all day in front of a computer at work, don't use the internet again when you get home. If your job doesn't allow internet access, then restrict yourself to an hour online in the evening. If there are no updates during this time, don't just wait—do what you need to do! Practice if you need to practice, take care of the kids if you have to, and go to bed when it's time.

Computers, televisions, and smartphones are all life-consuming predators.

Cherish your life, and keep away from these demons.

You'd be better off reciting sutras when you have free time.

Section 10: The monk with nasal congestion and the Horse-Face Elder Monk

I continued explaining to the junior disciples: "Practice is a technical discipline. How many cells the body is made of, how they operate, how the food we eat is digested, how the oxygen we breathe is absorbed

and converted into energy, and how each cell carries out metabolism—these may look simple, but if any step goes wrong, practice will come to a halt. It is not only the body; human consciousness also plays a role."

I pointed to a few monks sitting in meditation in the hall. "Look at those sallow, thin faces. What do you think is wrong with them?"

A disciple replied, "Maybe they have digestive issues?"

I continued asking, "Why are their digestive systems in poor condition? They do Sitting Meditation every day, and the Qi they cultivate should be enough to cure all kinds of ailments."

The disciple shook his head, "I really don't know. I'm not a doctor."

I explained, "I've observed them for a few days—they come to meditate directly after lunch. That's the problem! After eating, the stomach needs to undergo peristalsis to aid digestion. However, by meditating immediately, their deep breathing compresses the diaphragm onto the stomach, preventing its normal peristalsis. Over time, the stomach gradually loses its ability to contract, leading to bloating and poor digestion no matter what they eat. When a person becomes malnourished, they can no longer produce high-energy blood to generate Qi, and the longer they sit, the weaker they become."

"Now, look at the monk with nasal congestion who's constantly blowing his nose—what do you think his problem is?"

A disciple casually replied, "He has a cold, I guess."

I said, "He's been meditating for at least six or seven years. If he can still catch colds, he might as well pack up and go home—there's no point in practicing any more."

The disciple asked, "Is there also a deeper reason for this?"

"Of course!" I replied. "I've carefully listened to his breathing during meditation. He takes a deep breath and holds it for a long time, but by the end, his inhalations are incredibly shallow—yet he continues to hold his breath. That's the problem!"

"Air is made up of 78% nitrogen. If you don't exhale promptly, the nitrogen gets compressed into the bloodstream by lung pressure, raising the nitrogen concentration in the blood. In areas of higher pressure, the nitrogen dissolves into the blood, but in larger spaces like the joints, it turns into bubbles."

"Look at him—he covers his knees with a blanket while meditating. His joints probably hurt as if he had gout. When nitrogen travels to places like the nose or ears with many capillaries, it turns into bubbles, causing symptoms like rhinitis or tinnitus. If it accumulates in the gums, it can lead to gingivitis or bleeding gums. This is the same principle as decompression sickness experienced by divers suddenly surfacing from deep water! Severe decompression sickness could be fatal. Although meditation won't kill you, it will definitely prevent you from progressing to higher realms."

"Now look at the horse-face elder monk. He's been a Buddhist monk for at least 30 years, with perhaps 20 years of meditation practice. What problems do you think he has?"

The disciple replied, “That monk looks like a skilled and experienced practitioner. Does he have problems too?”

I said, “Yes, he does! He doesn’t understand the relationship between the body and the mind. I’ve carefully listened to his breathing—it has never exceeded 35 seconds. To go beyond the First Dhyana and enter the Second Dhyana, the breathing interval must exceed 40 seconds. This 40-second is a critical threshold.”

Look at his face—when he meditates to a certain extent, his lower jaw drops down. Although his lips are still closed, the teeth inside are separated.

Look at how his entire face has elongated—he must be focused on observing the Dantian.

The disciple exclaimed, “Wow! Senior Brother, you can discern someone’s method of practice just by observing their external appearance—that’s incredible! Is focused observation on the Dantian not allowed?”

I said, “Before clearing all the Meridian Channels, focused observation on the Dantian is an excellent way to accelerate unblocking the Central Meridian. But once they’re cleared, you should stop focusing on the Dantian. Wherever you place your attention, the muscles in that area will tighten and contract.”

As I’ve previously told you, during the stage of the Yang Spirit, the attention would concentrate on the Yang Spirit matter, forming a gravitational point. This principle applies to the human body as well!

For example, when you’re about to grab something, your attention is directed toward that object. The brain then sends signals to your finger muscles, causing them to tense up, reducing the likelihood of injury during the action. Additionally, extra blood is delivered to the finger muscles, making the nerve cells there become more sensitive to enhance tactile perception for a precise grip.

Why do people have calluses? Logically, frequent use of a particular area should wear it down, but humans develop calluses instead! This is because the attention directs extra blood flow to the area, accelerating cell metabolism and producing more keratin for skin protection.

What happens when you focus on observing the Dantian?

Initially, before Qi begins flowing through the Central Meridian, focused observation on the Dantian accelerates the Qi’s movement, causing the body to vibrate—you must have felt this before. Each time, the vibration helps the body relax further; after six or seven times, most bodily sensations disappear—you would enter into meditation.

At this stage, if you continue focused observing on the Dantian, its muscles begin to tense up. These previously relaxed muscles tighten again, causing the body to vibrate once more; with each vibration, the stiffness in your body increases, and the area affected by the stiffness expands progressively.

First, the lower abdominal muscles stiffen and contract, pulling down the upper abdominal muscles. With another vibration, the upper abdominal muscles stiffen and contract, pulling the chest downward.

Another vibration causes the muscles between the ribs to stiffen and contract, pulling the collarbone downward. One more vibration pulls the neck muscles via the collarbone, stiffening the neck muscles. Yet another vibration pulls the jawbone downward, eventually causing the lower jaw to drop.

Since you continue focusing intensely on the Dantian, you won't even be aware that your body is gradually stiffening. The muscles in your face are stretched into a horse-like appearance, with the gums of the lower teeth being pulled downward; over time, the teeth loosen and fall out. Notice he already has several missing lower teeth!

With each vibration, your body stiffens further; blood vessels constrict, reducing the blood flow to your brain; your mind begins to feel dull, your body stiffens, your temperature drops, and the drowsy mind ultimately pulls you out of dhyana.

People who focus on the Dantian can only reach the first Dhyana. They'll naturally come out of dhyana within four hours.

The disciple exclaimed, "Luckily, I heard these teachings while I still have all my teeth! I once thought about using the Dantian observation method—good fortune indeed! But Senior Brother, since you have seen these problems, why don't you tell them?"

I replied, "Look at them—do they seem like persuasible people?"

The disciple agreed, "True, it's a common shortcoming among practitioners! They are overly arrogant about their practice and refuse to listen to others. One can only say they lack merit and virtue."

I said, "There's a solution, but you'll need to cooperate with me and act along."

The disciple asked, "How do we act?"

I replied, "Just do as I say."

I instructed the junior disciple to observe their daily timetable and find out when they went to the toilet. When the monk with nasal congestion went to use the toilet, I went along with the disciple, taking adjacent positions to flank him—one on his left and the other on his right. There was a partition between the toilet cubicles, so we couldn't see each other, but we could hear clearly.

The junior disciple spoke loudly, saying, "I can't believe I've caught a cold and keep blowing my nose all the time—it's freezing in the mountains!"

I replied, "That's not a cold!"

Then I explained the theoretical reasoning.

Finally, the junior disciple asked, "Then how to remove nitrogen from the bloodstream?"

I answered, "Drink Pu'er tea! There's high-quality Pu'er tea in the tea room. Drink it generously every day—the more, the better."

The monk with nasal congestion squatted in the middle and stayed silent while listening. After we finished talking, we left, and so did he. He looked as if something was on his mind.

Next was the horse-face elder monk, and we used the same toilet tactic. We flanked him in adjacent stalls and shared the theories, eventually advising that after entering the First Dhyana , he should avoid focusing on any part of the body but instead to contemplate great questioning—this is the supreme method.

As we were about to leave, the elder monk finally couldn't resist asking, "Young Master, you seem to have profound insights into Zen practice. Since focused observing on the Dantian has such consequences, doesn't contemplating great questioning involve working on the head either? Won't it cause Qi and blood to rush upward?"

I responded, "Elder, you're overthinking! Ancient people believed that human consciousness resides in the heart, because they observed that when people feel sorrow, they truly experience pain in the heart; and when they feel unease, the tightness comes from their chest."

"When any emotion arises, the first area of response is the Danzhong Acupoint in the chest. Traditional Chinese medicine associates emotions with organ damage, such as joy harming the heart and anger harming the liver, etc. These effects occur only after emotions reach their peak, impacting other organs. But the initial and subtle responses always begin in the Danzhong Acupoint—which is also the core location of a person's Yang Spirit."

"To contemplate great questioning is essentially to apply effort at the core of the Yang Spirit. This allows the Yang Spirit to form an orderly spherical circulation, which in turn drives the Qi and blood in the body into a harmonious circulation."

"When your contemplation great questioning reaches the point where the emotion of great questioning remains present in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, you will notice that even when you are not doing Sitting Meditation, the Qi still moves gently through the center Meridian. And when you try to enter into dhyana, you will be able to enter into dhyana within a single breath—even while standing."

The elder monk simply said he'd taken the teachings and go out. I didn't think much of it and left with my disciple.

Unexpectedly, the elder monk didn't leave. Right there at the lavatory entrance, he dropped to the ground and prostrated himself. When a monk bows to you, you bow in return—so my fellow disciple and I hurriedly prostrated ourselves back. The monk with nasal congestion

In terms of attitude, it became clear the elder monk was far better than . With a single prostration, he could receive the subtle insights gained from countless lifetimes of practice—it had to be said that's truly extraordinary.

My disciple and I helped the elder monk stand up, but he held onto my hand tightly, inspecting it thoroughly as he flipped it over.

I thought, "You've already kowtowed—are you still testing my kungfu? Since I dared to teach, I won't hesitate to show a technique."

I took a deep breath, causing my hand to suddenly cool and turn blue. Then I held my breath and directed Qi into my hand, which quickly warmed and turned red—the transition between cold and hot happened within seconds.

The elder monk was startled and exclaimed, "Could the young master be from Shaolin Temple?"

He seemed to think I had practiced Qi Gong. He looked up at me briefly, then flipped my hand over to check for calluses left by martial arts training.

I replied, “I’ve studied under the lineage of such-and-such monks; my master’s Dharma name is such-and-such, and his master’s name is also such-and-such—you flatter me."

As I spoke, my complexion shifted from dull to rosy, and my eyes lit up—the elder monk was truly startled. Just as he was about to say something, the bell rang; it was time for Sitting Meditation. We bowed to each other quickly and went off to Meditation, and we did not speak again for several days.

I often saw the monk with nasal congestion drinking tea—constantly drinking, both before and after meals. During meditation, he would sit close to the door and frequently use the toilet, but he still didn’t talk with us.

The elder monk, however, was more open. Within days, he started warming up to us—mentioning that he’d begun contemplating great questioning and felt significantly better. He constantly asked questions about various subjects, making the junior disciple a little annoyed with him. Still, the elder monk didn’t concern himself with others’ opinions of him.

Seeing that we didn’t meditate in the afternoons but instead practiced prostrations and breathing exercises, the elder monk fetched himself a cushion and joined us. Despite being older, he managed to keep up intermittently for two hours.

We walked around the Mahavira Hall practicing our breathing, and our walking speed was already quite fast. The elder monk followed closely behind—no matter he could undertake the practice, he just watched carefully and followed our methods.

In the evening, I took the disciples to the tea room for some casual conversation. Both of them were beginners, meditating eight hours a day and practicing breathing and prostrations in the afternoon—which was already commendable. Rest was still necessary. The elder monk joined us for company!

We were really just chatting—talking about women getting cosmetic surgery and about Korean music. The elder monk listened with a slightly dejected look, thinking we were deliberately avoiding any discussion of the Buddhist Dharma in front of him.

I later took the opportunity to tell him that several monks in the Zen hall were facing issues and asked him to help guide them. The elder monk had considerable prestige in the Zen hall, and people were more likely to accept his words.

When we were about to leave the mountain, he walked us all the way to the foot of the mountain and asked for my contact information. I gave him the name of my master’s temple and its phone number. He also wrote his phone number on a piece of paper for me and mentioned that his junior disciple was the abbot of a large temple in Guangdong. That temple also accepted lay Buddhists to practice Zen together.

He said that if I ever went there to guide at the meditation hall, I would surely be welcomed. Guangdong is a prosperous place with no shortage of wealthy people, and the temple receives generous

offerings. By accepting a few wealthy lay Buddhists as apprentices, I would have nothing to worry about for the rest of my life—both reputation and wealth would come easily.

I didn't want to turn him down directly, so I told him I'd discuss it with my master and contact him afterward.

Chapter 6: The Human Body

Section 01: Breathing

Don't ask about the practice in the distant future—if you can reach the Fourth Dhyana in this lifetime, that's already the pinnacle. The subsequent Dhyana of the Formless Realm can only be practiced under the guidance of those who have already attained liberation from samsara. The teachings on the Dhyana of the Formless Realm were already explained at the very beginning. But actual practice and theory are not the same thing.

Right now, the theory that everyone needs most is still about breathing!

1. Breathing and Delusion

How many of you have cleared your meridian channels? How many of you understand the direct connection between breathing and practice? If you don't even understand breathing, how can you practice?——what is the use of memorizing so many books?

This section still talks about breathing—but in greater depth—to encourage everyone to start from practice breathing.

No matter how busy you are, you can't possibly stop breathing. You are breathing every single moment—just place a bit of attention on your breath, and clearing your meridian channels will come much faster.

The faster you breathe, the shorter your lifespan; the slower you breathe, the longer your lifespan—and this is common knowledge. How long can a turtle live, breathing just once a minute? How long can an elephant live, breathing six times a minute? Look at the dogs around us: how fast do they breathe, and how long do they live?

A normal person breathes 18 to 20 times per minute—how long can such a person live, and how healthy can they be? Everyone has a clear idea. When the Great Flood wiped out the previous human civilization, it is said that the oxygen level in the air then was 38%, whereas today it is only 20.98%. Clearly, people of that earlier civilization must have had much longer lifespans than those of our era, and their bodies should have been taller as well—these findings have been confirmed by archeology .

Then let me tell you this: when the Buddha was alive, people back then breathed only eight times per minute—do you believe it ? Count how many breaths you take in a minute yourself—reciting sutras won't help!

Start your practice with breathing! More breaths mean more energy consumption; more energy consumption means more delusions in the mind; and more delusions in the mind means more afflictions.

When the Buddha was alive, people back then had nothing much to worry about except food and clothing. There was no television, no computers or mobile phones; no cars or airplanes; no anxiety about going to university or finding a job; no entertainment venues of all kinds. The brewing methods of that era produced only rice wines and fruit wines with alcohol content even lower than today's beer. For people of that age, as long as the Buddha taught a simple foundational mental method, their practice could quickly take hold.

Look at people today—how restless they are, what fills their minds, and how heightened their desires have become. Statistics show that the United States has the highest average breathing rate per minute, and thus the highest proportion of mental-illness cases. South Korea, an IT powerhouse, now ranks second in average breathing rate per minute, and first in suicide rates. The Korean government even funds suicide-prevention centers: if you call at any time to say that you, or someone else, intends to commit suicide, they will immediately dispatch therapists, negotiation specialists, and other professionals to intervene. Such is the sad reality—and China is not much better.

If you wish to reduce delusions in your mind and get your practice on track more quickly, start by slowing down your breath. The specific method has already been explained earlier. The amount of air you inhale in one breath should not exceed 20% of your normal intake—take it step by step!

When your normal breathing rate falls below five times per minute, and when breathing rate during sitting meditation drops below one time per minute, you are already very close to enlightenment.

Let's set aside the realms experienced during dhyana and instead rely entirely on the body's changes to describe the progress of practice.

Let's start from the nasal cavity!

Between the lower part of the eyeballs and the upper part of the mouth, there is a large space called the nasal cavity. This nasal cavity regulates the temperature of incoming air—when the air is too warm, it cools it; when the air is too cold, it warms it. Nasal hairs block larger foreign particles, and the mucous membranes secrete mucus to trap finer dust.

At the time of birth, our nasal cavities are filled with amniotic fluid. If the nasal cavity is not properly cleaned at that moment, the likelihood of developing respiratory diseases later in life increases dramatically.

Also, observe the people around you—you will notice that some of them breathe through their mouths. The mouth has no filtering system, so long-term mouth breathing can inflict severe, even fatal damage on the throat. Inhalation must be done through the nose; while exhalation may be done through the mouth.

Then let's talk about the bronchial branches below, which are about 11 centimeters long. You have no idea how much dirt adheres to the inner walls of these tracheas! Only when you unblock the Danzhong Acupoint through genuine practice can you truly feel how severely the tracheas were blocked. Once the Danzhong Acupoint is opened, the incoming air feels astonishingly refreshing, making each inhalation and exhalation extremely comfortable. Without practice, you can never experience this feeling.

Now let's look at the lungs. The right lung has three lung lobes, large and rounded, while the left lung has only two lung lobes smaller in size because the heart occupies part of its space. The bronchus splits into two main branches at the center of the lungs, and each branch, upon entering the lung, splits again and again, continuing downward until they reach the alveoli at the lowest regions of the lungs—branches thinner than a needle tip. At the ends of these bronchial branches hang grape-like clusters of alveoli, which are responsible for performing gas exchange.

Do you know how long it takes for air to travel from the nose all the way to the alveoli at the very bottom of the lungs? The answer is six seconds! These six seconds include the time spent exhaling as well as the pauses in between. This means that only if you breathe fewer than ten times per minute can air actually reach the alveoli at the bottom of the lungs.

The specific breathing method has already been discussed earlier—it is abdominal breathing, which requires the diaphragm to move downward as much as possible. I won't repeat it here!

When you inhale a sufficient amount of oxygen, the small-intestine cells are the first to be activated, and the cells begin to carry out metabolism with high efficiency. You will feel heat arising in the body, and then you will feel the presence of Qi sensation.

Next, let's take a look at our body. We cannot control the movement of the viscera that are controlled by the parasympathetic nerves. I am not certain whether these medical terms are entirely precise or not, as long as everyone understands the idea, that is enough. The movement of the arms, legs, and other muscle groups that we can control is governed by the sympathetic nerves. Within the body's muscle system, there are also involuntary muscles that we cannot control and voluntary muscles that we can.

Did you know that at the very end of the bronchi, right where they connect to the alveoli, a region even thinner than a needle tip, there are also muscles? These muscles adhere closely to the inner wall of the bronchi, much like the anal muscles adhere around the human anus. Let's simply call them terminal muscles.

In healthy individuals, the inner walls of these terminal muscles (terminal bronchi) are smooth and clean, whereas in unhealthy individuals the inner walls may be coated with foreign matter. For people such as smokers, the quality of their breathing is certainly far from good.

Our lungs contain over 3 million of these terminal muscles (the smooth muscles located on the walls of the terminal bronchioles). How are these muscle fibers regulated? They are controlled by a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine. These neurotransmitters also belong to the parasympathetic nerves system—which you cannot control at will.

As long as these terminal muscles contract, the alveoli cannot receive sufficient air, and the body starts to run low on oxygen.

Then conversely, how can we allow the terminal muscles to expand fully so that the alveoli receive sufficient air and provide the body with adequate oxygen?

The answer is: empty your mind! The more thoughts arise, the more the muscle governed by the parasympathetic nerves will contract throughout the body. The body then fails to receive sufficient oxygen,

and starts to feel unwell. You will become increasingly agitated, giving rise to even more delusions. The more delusion, the more tightly the terminal muscles contract. A vicious cycle forms—until the body is dragged down and collapses into illness.

The human body is so subtle! Your consciousness is constantly controlling the body—yet you still treat the body and consciousness as separate, believing that Buddhist practice is merely about cultivating the mind and has nothing to do with the body. If that's the case, you haven't even begun.

Whether you practice or not, whenever you are triggered and various emotions of suffering arise, all muscles controlled by the parasympathetic nerves will contract.

First, you will feel difficulty breathing, which leads you to breathe faster. Within our blood vessels there also exist involuntary muscles; these muscles also begin to contract, causing disruption in blood circulation. The capillaries at the distal ends of the blood vessels become completely blocked. As a result, blood fails to enter the capillaries and instead flows toward the head, causing the blood pressure inside the skull to rise. Before the blood vessels in the brain rupture, the brain, in an attempt to protect itself, redirects blood into the nasal cavity. Fleshy growths then begin to form inside the nasal cavity, further obstructing normal breathing and decreasing the amount of oxygen your body receives. This, again, is a vicious cycle—until it eventually sends you to the hospital.

The phenomenon of Qi and blood rushing upward that occurs in practitioners when they do not focus on the head is also related to being stimulated. Previously, we discussed one possible cause; here, another is presented: when the brain experiences lack of oxygen, damage to brain cells leads to functional impairments in the body's organs. All involuntary muscles fail to operate properly, and the entire functioning of the body begins to decline.

What happens if your breathing rate is relatively fast?

The oxygen content in the air is 20.98%—that’s the percentage when inhaled, and 16.5% when exhaled. If your breathing is fast, you're only absorbing about 4.5% of oxygen each time. Yet, because you're rushing into the next breath, the air you just exhaled hasn’t fully left your body before it’s drawn back in. As a result, you end up repeatedly breathing low-oxygen air. The consequences are obvious—no need to elaborate.

2. Breathing and Cellular Upgrades

Now we come to the key point—a phenomenon that only those who have truly reached this realm through practice can experience.

When your breathing drops below ten times per minute, the oxygen you take in becomes sufficient to generate high-energy blood, which is used to repair body cells. The process of this high-energy blood circulating will be skipped here. At this stage, one is essentially in the stages of Dhyana in the Desire Realm or the First Dhyana. This marks the first upgrade of the body—meaning clearing all the meridian channels of the body. The sensation of heat flow throughout the body gradually settles into stillness.

When the duration of a single breath extends to 30 seconds, then 40, then 50 seconds—that is, when you enter the Second Dhyana from the First Dhyana—and your attention shifts from an intermittent state to a highly concentrated state, the oxygen you inhale becomes more than sufficient. Yet your body remains still, the six sense faculties are not grasping external conditions, and only the slight up-and-down movement of the diaphragm consumes a minimal amount of energy.

When your attention is highly concentrated—an ordinary person's brain consumes 50% of the body's glucose and 20% of its oxygen—whereas your deeply focused attention requires very little glucose and oxygen. At this point, the surplus energy begins to initiate a second upgrade of the body's cells.

You will feel a tingling sensation throughout your entire body, as if electric current is flowing within you—this sensation is entirely different from the feeling of heat flow experienced before entering the First Dhyana.

All the cells in your body begin generating bioelectric energy—like deep-sea fish do. I'm not sure if it's really biological electric energy—it's simply a sense of energy beyond our normal understanding, with a tingling sensation spreading all over your body.

This Qi sensation is exactly the Yang spirit true Qi! The true Qi, with immensely potent high energy, begins to strike the Central Channel. Compared to this, the earlier impact of high-energy blood on the Central Channel is worlds apart.

This time, the charging begins from the left kidney—not a sensation of heat, but purely described as a sense of being electrically charged. The kidney feels like being warmed in a microwave, generating electric energy through vibration, and then the right kidney begins recharging.

After the two kidneys finish recharging, the tingling electric energy begins to climb up along the spine, and every cell along the way undergoes a second activation.

When the tingling electric energy enters the brain, you'll feel your consciousness expanding exponentially—and this is only the first time. The electric current flows down the face into the Danzhong (middle chest), then to the Dantian (lower abdomen), bursts through the Dantian (lower abdomen) and moves to the penis—causing it to erect suddenly—then bursts through the perineum and returns to the lower back.

Here, there are three major acupoints around the tip of the tailbone: one on each side and one in the middle. The electric current begins its second journey through the Central Channel. Along the spine in the middle of the back, there are three more major acupoints—again, one central and two lateral. Moving further upward to the back of the neck, the Jade Pillow (Yuzhen) acupoint is joined by two more on either side, making a total of nine major points. This configuration is known as the Three Passes (Coccyx Pass, Spine Pass, Jade Pillow Pass) and Nine Orifices.

When the electric current breaks through the Three Passes and Nine Orifices and enters the brain for the second time, the explosion of consciousness feels like a nuclear blast, suddenly shattering the body's obstructions and forming an oliveshaped YangSpirit Energy Field around the body. This is what is called the Second Dhyana bodycharging.

When you remain in this meditative state (the Second Dhyana) for extended periods of practice, and your attention is completely extinguished, the body relaxes even further.

When the body vibrates, the skeleton produces a cracking sound. As each breath stretches beyond one minute, the olive-shaped Yang-Spirit begins to take on a spherical form. Within the energy field, the movement of energy forms a self-spinning vortex, initiating a third upgrade of the body's cells.

This upgrade expels excess impurities from every cell, allowing the cells to become clear and permeable.

The previous blocks in the circulation of bodily fluids and blood are significantly reduced. With the body's energy demands decreasing even further, even your attention dissolves—leaving only the subtle presence of the emotion of great questioning or the emotion of longing.

As the brain requires even less energy, your heart gradually comes to a stop—no longer needing to beat in order to drive blood circulation. So what then powers the blood circulation?

There is a difference in blood pressure between the upper and lower limbs of the body—when the upper limbs are at 120 mmHg, the pressure in the thighs is around 140 mmHg. The pressure difference, coupled with the diaphragm movement of less than once a minute, is sufficient to drive the blood to circulate on its own This is called the Third Dhyana: the fluidization of the body.

With extended practice in the Third Dhyana, emotions of suffering are extinguished, the body relaxes even further, and each breath extends beyond two minutes, even three.

The self-spinning vortex of the Yang-Spirit loses its central gravity point and begins to diffuse into empty space. This marks the beginning of a fourth upgrade of the body's cells—transforming each cell from being merely permeable to becoming thoroughly transparent.

The cells expel impurities even further, and gaps develop in the cell walls. Pores expand, allowing external air to directly enter through the pores and reach the capillaries beneath them. Gaps also appear in the blood vessel walls, allowing your blood to absorb oxygen directly from the external air. Breathing gradually comes to a halt, the diaphragm ceases to move, and the body's energy requirement drops to its lowest possible level.

When others enter the range of your Yang-Spirit, they will suddenly feel mentally clear, and their delusions will diminish. This Yang-Spirit Energy Field also has a therapeutic effect on areas of illness in the body, making anyone who comes near you feel physically soothed and inwardly joyful. This is the Fourth Dhyana: the Qi Transformation of the Body!

Don't forget that we're in the scientific era now. Americans have invited Tibetan monks for experiments, attaching various instruments to their bodies to observe the physical changes.

If you claim to have attained enlightenment, it's quite simple to verify—just take a drop of your blood for analysis, and the results of various hormone levels will reveal the truth.

If you claim that you can activate internal force to heal others or perform Qi-related therapies, simply use an instrument to measure it. It will be apparent whether or not Qi is emitted from your hands! Qi is a form of thermal energy and exhibits changes in temperature.

Although the Yang spirit substance is not a material of our world, the changes in the body—such as the Qi transformation of cells and the appearance of hormones in the blood—can be fully detected.

Before long, practice will be entirely verifiable through science—yet you're still trying to bamboozle people with book knowledge. You might deceive those who don't know better, but you can't fool real practitioners, and you certainly can't fool scientific instruments.

You talk about the Dharma Eye, yet you don't even understand breathing. You can't even direct Yang spirit true Qi into your eyes to enhance eyesight—the lowest-level form of supernatural powers with the physical eyes—and you still speak of the Dharma Eye? Wake up!

Talking too much would make others think I'm showing off or mocking others—it's not even worth saying more; it's a waste of time. If you want to engage in practice, then start earnestly with prostration and breathing.

To those asking about the mind of discrimination and delusion—I say, first attain Qi Transformation of the Body before studying the mind of discrimination; there's no rush! It's like someone who can't even get today's meal worrying about what to eat tomorrow—what's the point?

3. Breathing and Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS)

Let us first quote a portion from an article by Fu Xiuhong published in China Medical News.

Reactive oxygen species (ROS) are reactive substances produced at the molecular level after oxygen is absorbed by the human body. ROS are also known as oxygen free radicals. An excessive amount of oxygen free radicals, which exceeds the human body's capacity to eliminate ROS, will trigger the lipid peroxidation of biological membranes and easily generate new free radicals, thus endangering human health.

To suppress the increase of ROS, the human body produces superoxide dismutase (SOD) to neutralize them. Before the age of 25, the human body has a robust capacity to produce SOD, making ROS relatively harmless. However, after middle age, the body's production of SOD declines, and the harmful effects of ROS intensify, which tends to lead to aging and adult-onset diseases.

Dr. Shigeo Haruyama, medical doctor and director of Denen Toshi Kosei Hospital, once said: "If we could encapsulate oxygen and only take it out when our bodies generate energy, and then live in an oxygen-free environment, humans could probably live for several hundred years." Therefore, as one reaches middle age, minimizing the damage caused by ROS and maintaining youthful vitality becomes increasingly important.

ROS, based on cases of adult-onset diseases, are most likely to cause damage to the cardiovascular system and the genetic material within the nuclei of cells. When ROS accumulate to a certain level, they

injure the inner vascular wall, triggering conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, and arteriosclerosis. If the genetic material in cell nuclei is damaged by ROS, it can easily become carcinogenic.

When ROS bind with fat in the human body, they cause the skin to sag and accelerate aging. To guard against ROS, one must carry out a “revolution” in daily diet. Never consume food that is not fresh or has been partially oxidized. Eat fewer canned or plastic-packaged foods, and avoid leftovers entirely. Reduce the intake of high-calorie foods to eliminate the ROS generated during digestion.

Substances that inhibit oxidation are called antioxidants. Vitamins E, A, and C are all important antioxidants. Yellow and green vegetables, green tea, and sesame can enhance the body’s antioxidant capacity when consumed. It is also crucial for the body to obtain the raw materials needed to produce SOD. Eating more protein-rich foods can help supplement SOD and neutralize ROS. Water rich in negative ions can help prevent and counteract the damage ROS cause to the human body.

It is crucial to note that when a person becomes angry, depressed, or experiences intense emotional fluctuations, large amounts of norepinephrine and epinephrine are released. In the split second when blood vessels rapidly constrict and then relax, the resulting reperfusion of blood generates ROS, which can be especially harmful to the human body.

Therefore, maintaining a calm mood and not getting angry or flustered when things happen—is a key to preserving health in daily life.

For daily movement, gentle, fat-burning activities like walking or jogging are recommended. These forms of exercise stimulate the release of a hormone in the brain similar to morphine. This hormone helps neutralize ROS, playing a role in anti-aging and enhancing the body’s natural healing power.

What are ROS? Most people aren’t trained in medicine and know little about modern medical science. But if you want to engage in practice, you must understand these things—otherwise, dying halfway is just a matter of time. You can think of ROS as oxygen also having a shelf life..

It takes about 20 seconds for blood to circulate through the entire body. Within this time, oxygen must be fully absorbed by the cells and carbon dioxide expelled in a timely manner. If blood circulation is obstructed and flow is hindered in any part of the body, then once oxygen passes its shelf life the oxygen molecules will turn into ROS. These ROS can then trigger inflammation in the surrounding cells.

4. Breathing and Recitation of Buddha's Name, Mantras

Seeing someone mention reciting mantras, let’s talk a bit about how reciting mantras or Buddha name affects the human body. There are three ways to recite mantras or the Buddha’s name. The best method is silent recitation—that is, reciting internally, without moving the lips or making a sound. The subtler the thought, the better; and no delusions arise. It is not easy to reach the level, which requires long-term practice.

A slightly less refined method involves moving the lips without engaging the vocal cords, while maintaining normal breathing—reciting during both inhalation and exhalation. However, if you try to keep reciting even while inhaling, you’ll be forced to breathe through your mouth. So this method has its

limitations. It is a way of reciting while the mind is still filled with delusions—reciting while simultaneously generating delusions.

The least refined method is vocal recitation. This is used when delusion is too overwhelming to control. The volume may vary—low enough for only oneself to hear, or loud enough for others to hear. Why is this considered the least refined method? The answer lies in the fundamental principles of human breathing.

When a person recites mantras or Buddha name out loud, the exhalation naturally becomes prolonged—short inhalation, long exhalation. During this extended exhalation, both the chest muscles and abdominal muscles are engaged and remain contracted.

When a baby is born, the body is round and full. As we age, the chest and abdominal muscles gradually tighten, compressing the body what was once a rounded form. If you persist in forcefully reciting mantras or Buddha name out loud, these muscles remain in a prolonged state of tension and will continue to tighten. Once they tighten beyond a certain point, you'll find it hard to breathe—it will become hard to inhale.

You won't notice these changes after just two or three months of reciting—but if you continue to forcefully recite for long hours every day, after two or three years, you'll begin to feel shortness of breath. Your entire chest bones will be compressed, and your breathing quality will steadily decline. What's even more critical is that your blood will also be compromised. After leaving the heart, blood must travel to the lungs for gas exchange—absorbing oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide.

However, with prolonged exhalation, your heart does not slow down its rhythm. Blood returns to the heart without having completed proper gas exchange, and is then pumped throughout the body once again. As a result, this recirculated blood contains less oxygen and more carbon dioxide.

But the person won't die yet—why? Because the oxygen content of the air entering the body is 20.98%, and the air exhaled still contains around 15% oxygen. So if you stop inhaling and remain in a prolonged exhalation state, your blood will undergo another round of gas exchange with this 15% oxygen air.

It's simple: years of vocal mantra recitation will eventually lead to illness caused by lack of oxygen. The chest and abdominal muscles become increasingly tense, abdominal pressure rises, and more blood is pushed into the brain. This results in a rush of blood and Qi upward, leading to symptoms like head fullness, headaches, and other adverse reactions.

Therefore, if you're reciting Buddha name or chanting scriptures out loud, it's best not to exceed two hours a day. When you're not reciting, do prostration, go for a jog, take a walk, or practice breathing to counteract the negative effects. Sitting all day and reciting intensely—especially out loud—is not a wise method.

Let's now turn to the topic of breathing methods.

Some people like to hold their breath—holding it after inhaling, and again after exhaling. I've also taught breath-holding techniques, but I've always emphasized that each session should be limited to 20

minutes and not go on for too long. In the early stages, it's indeed an effective way to quickly increase lung capacity. However, if you practice it for too long, it becomes a habit. Later on, during sitting meditation, you may start holding your breath unconsciously—and that's when serious problems can arise.

When you hold your breath after inhaling, your heartbeat doesn't stop—blood continues to flow into the lungs. The external atmospheric pressure is 760 mmHg, while the pressure in the lungs is about 755 mmHg. In order for gasses to be pushed into the bloodstream, the pressure within the blood must be even higher than the lung pressure—around 860 to 870 mmHg.

When blood under such high pressure enters the lungs, the sudden drop in pressure causes the gasses in the blood to form bubbles. But since you're still holding your breath, the carbon dioxide and nitrogen that have turned into bubbles cannot be expelled from the body. Instead, they are forced back into the bloodstream and sent back to the heart.

At this point, however, the pressure in the blood decreases and is no longer sufficient to fully compress the gasses. As a result, the blood becomes foamy, and this foamy blood circulates throughout the entire body via the blood vessels.

When the foamy blood reaches low-pressure regions such as the joints, the gasses it carries expand into more bubbles, which then block the flow of blood into these regions. This leads to the emergence of ROS—and the combination of bubbles and ROS causes inflammation in the joints.

When the foamy blood reaches the head, it tends to form bubbles in areas like the nasal cavity or ears, leading to rhinitis or inflammation of the eardrum. If you continue practicing this way over a long period, various forms of inflammation may arise throughout the entire body—this must not be taken lightly!

Breathing may seem simple—but the moment you try to control it with intention, problems will arise no matter how you practice! All you need is to develop the habit of abdominal breathing. When sitting in meditation, do not focus on the breath, and absolutely do not try to control it.

When your practice reaches a certain level, your breathing will naturally deepen, and each breath will become long—you'll inhale a large volume of air, but won't exhale right away. At that point, you should be aware that bubbles may begin to form in the blood. However, if you intentionally raise your attention to exhale, then you won't be able to enter into meditation.

So what should you do at this point? The simplest solution is physical exercise—keep up with prostration until you sweat, or go for a steady jog. Don't just sit all day, and don't avoid physical activity when you're not in meditation. Once you begin to sweat, the bubbles in your blood will be released along with the sweat.

Another method is drinking tea—Pu'er tea is the best! Relax your body, drink hot Pu'er, and once your body warms up and you start sweating, the bubbles will be released as well. That's why Zen rooms always keep a variety of teas in stock—not just for show. The ancient practitioners studied the Way of Tea for good reason!

So, does that mean only physical exercise and drinking tea can eliminate these bubbles? What about those who sit for an entire day—or even several days at a time? How do they manage it? Here lies another secret—one that only those engaged in true practice can come to understand.

When your breathing deepens and you sustain it for a period of time, bubbles begin to form in the blood, blocking the capillaries. The body starts to become stiff, the breath turns shallow again, and a sense of unease arises. You'll feel confused—and that emotional state will only make your body even stiffer. After you get up and relax, you sit again the next day, only to go through the same cycle. Your practice stalls for a long time, and your confusion deepens. If you meet a master who gives you a pointer, you'll know how to resolve it. But if you don't, you'll simply lose confidence amidst this back-and-forth.

The method is simple: empty your mind. If you've been focusing on attention, then at this point you must let go of attention and instead turn to contemplating great questioning or the emotion of longing. If you've already been contemplating great questioning or the emotion of longing, then at this stage, these states must be maintained with even greater subtlety.

At the threshold between having emotions and having none, when your mind is emptied to this level, your body relaxes even further. Your pores begin to expand—this is the final stage of physical relaxation. Once all the pores open, the bubbles in your blood are released through them. This is the key to moving from the Second Dhyana to the Third Dhyana!

For practitioners who have reached this level, when they soak in a bathhouse, tiny bubbles will appear on the surface of their skin. So far, among all the practitioners I've encountered, those who have reached this level are extremely rare—you could count them on one hand.

Let me say it again—practice is grounded in the body! Enlightenment must be realized through direct experience; it cannot be attained through intellectual understanding. The sutras only present the basic principles of the Dharma—they don't teach actual embodied practice. Go ahead and flip through the entire Eighty Thousand Tripitaka—how many texts start with detailed, body-based instructions? At most, you'll find a few basic breathing methods.

The method described in the Anapana practice—"short inhalation, long exhalation"—is actually incorrect. If you follow it, it's only a matter of time before problems arise!

The majority of sutras—especially Mahayana sutras—speak about the realms attained after becoming a Buddha or a Bodhisattva.

The 1,255 individuals who followed and practiced under the guidance of the Buddha were not ordinary people—most of them had previously trained as non-Buddhist ascetics and had already cleared all their meridian channels. Of course, the Buddha had no need to go into detail about the body.

That's why you can treat the sutras as mythology, which can't guide actual practice. You may read many sutras and feel as if you've gained great wisdom—but the moment you encounter difficulties in sitting meditation, you become lost. And when you turn to the scriptures for help, you'll find nothing that specific.

Take the simplest example: before the meridian channels have been cleared, it's common during sitting meditation—around the 20 -to-30-minute mark—for bright lights to appear before your eyes, even

when they're closed. You might think someone is shining a light at you, so you open your eyes to check—but nothing's there. Then you assume it's some advanced realm.

Go ahead and ask so-called practitioners why this phenomenon occurs. How many of them can actually give you a real answer?

The answer is quite simple: as the oxygen in your blood increases, your optic nerve receives more oxygen, becomes activated, and begins to metabolize more rapidly, undergoing subtle changes—that's why you can see this kind of light even with your eyes closed. This doesn't even count as a hallucination! The same phenomenon can occur with your auditory nerves and olfactory nerves as well.

Whenever you have time, do more prostrations, practice your breathing, and earnestly engage in Buddha name recitation and sitting meditation!

If you can't accept seeing others who are at a higher realm than you, that in itself is sickness.

If you try to direct others with a few scraps of book knowledge—no matter how correct you think you are—it's meaningless. Why? Would Bill Gates listen to your business advice? Even if every word you said made sense, he wouldn't care. Would a country's president listen to you, an ordinary citizen, explain politics to him? Even if you memorized world history and national development flawlessly, he wouldn't care.

If you wish to guide others, you must surpass them—otherwise, no matter what you say, it won't matter!

Take the same sutras—if the Buddha teaches it, I'll listen; if you teach it, I won't!

The Buddha said, "Seeking Dharma outside your own mind gets you nowhere!" If you search for enlightenment within the scriptures, that is precisely seeking the Dharma outside the mind.

Once you've read the sutras, you should seek enlightenment within your own body and consciousness!

Section 02: The Brain

This section discusses the brain.

As mentioned earlier, one enters into dhyana when one is extremely clear-headed. Not only clear, but also refreshing—meaning consciousness feels very comfortable. The degree of clarity of consciousness is determined by the health of the brain cells. Therefore, a key to practice is to make the brain cells comfortable by supplying them with sufficient oxygen and glucose.

Let us first look at what functions our brain has.

The first function is receiving information. Sensations coming through the five sense faculties enter the brain and become the various pieces of information we can perceive. Then, the analyzing and thinking based on this information is Attachment to Verbal Thought. The brain also allocates attention, directing our attention to where it needs to go.

Another function is secreting various hormones. Our emotions already exist when the brain appears—it starts from when one generates emotion of great questioning in the Third Dhyana Heaven. When we encounter situations, emotions arise first.

Moreover, deep within our consciousness there are also seeds of emotion, and sometimes these seeds erupt without reason. These emotions affect the brain, causing it to secrete corresponding hormones. These hormones enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body, then the body undergoes corresponding changes.

For example, when we obtain something we strongly desire, joy arises in our heart. The brain then secretes a hormone called dopamine, also known as the happiness hormone. This hormone enters the bloodstream and circulates throughout the body; the body relaxes, blood vessels dilate, muscles loosen, breathing becomes smooth, blood circulation accelerates, and one feels very comfortable and energetic. Conversely, when we encounter unfortunate events, various emotions of suffering such as agitation, anger, and sorrow arise. At such times the brain also secretes corresponding hormones. These hormones cause the body to become stiff, blood vessels to constrict, muscles to tighten, breathing to become difficult, and blood circulation to be impeded, making one feel even more miserable.

For a practitioner who wishes to keep consciousness clear and maintain a refreshing state, the first task is to make the brain cells comfortable.

What conditions are required for the brain cells to feel comfortable?

First, we must look at the volume of blood flowing into the brain—this volume must be neither too much nor too little, but moderate. We must also consider the glucose and oxygen content in the blood.

When the amount of blood flowing into the brain is moderate and the glucose and oxygen it carries are sufficient, the brain cells feel very comfortable and our consciousness becomes very clear. If the brain cells cannot obtain sufficient glucose and oxygen, they become damaged, triggering a chain reaction: the function of the viscera declines, and the body falls ill accordingly.

Let us first see what happens when the brain cells lack oxygen but not glucose.

At that time the brain creates a feeling of drowsiness, urging you to sleep quickly. While sleeping, the amount of oxygen intake increases. The body does not move, so that oxygen consumption decreases. Then the brain may obtain sufficient oxygen.

If you become drowsy while sitting in meditation but you still force yourself to persist, your consciousness will become dull, and hallucinations will start to appear—at this point your brain cells have already begun to be damaged. That is why I previously said that if you feel sleepy or dull, you should simply go to sleep instead of forcing yourself to continue.

If you have trained your breathing well and your physical condition is good, then when you sit in meditation while feeling drowsy, the amount of oxygen you take in will increase after a short while, the drowsiness will disappear, and leaves you feeling refreshed and alert. Therefore, some people are unwilling to practice sitting meditation before bed—once they sit, the drowsiness vanishes and instead they find themselves unable to fall asleep.

Next let us see what happens when the brain cells lack glucose but not oxygen.

This is the case of a patient with low blood sugar. The first symptom is dizziness! In order to obtain more glucose, the brain sends commands to all the viscera and muscles controlled by the parasympathetic nerves, causing the viscera to operate rapidly and the small intestine to absorb more glucose. As a result, the involuntary muscles in the blood vessels also begin to contract and expand together, and the person starts to tremble all over—this is why people with low blood sugar often shake.

When such trembling still cannot secure additional glucose, the brain chooses to shut down—that is, shock. This shock has two forms. One is physical shock: you suddenly collapse, the body cannot move, yet consciousness remains. You can hear the sounds around you and your eyeballs can move slightly, but the body cannot move. If the lack of glucose is severe, the brain shuts down completely—this is complete systemic shock. Not only is the body unable to move, but consciousness also disappears, and you directly faint. Apart from the part that controls the movements of the viscera, all other brain cells cease working. You cannot think, cannot hear, and cannot see, and after waking up you have no memory of it.

The third situation is that the brain cells lack both glucose and oxygen.

At that time the brain cells issue commands to the heart, making it increase blood pressure so as to supply the brain with more glucose and blood. The result is that more blood flows into the brain, causing intracranial blood pressure to rise. You will feel swelling in your head; if it worsens you develop a headache, then a splitting headache.

At such a time, you will feel that the throbbing of your headache and your heartbeat share the same rhythm. With each beat of the heart, the pain intensifies, as if a hammer were striking your head synchronously with the heartbeat. If you suddenly move, or your emotions fluctuate too violently, the heart beats even more forcefully, your headache suddenly worsens, and you may even feel an urge to bang your head against a wall. If the intracranial blood pressure rises further, the capillaries in the brain will rupture, leading to cerebral hemorrhage and death.

When too much blood flows into the brain, the capillaries in the brain dilate and start to press on the surrounding brain cells, cutting off the nerve connections between brain cells. The brain cells can no longer function properly, and hormone secretion becomes disordered, producing more harmful hormones that make the body even more stiff and blood pressure rise further. This becomes a vicious cycle that grows ever more severe.

If the blood entering the brain cannot flow out quickly but remains there for a long time, the oxygen in the blood turns into reactive oxygen species (ROS), which begin to corrode the surrounding brain cells, causing them to become inflamed—then meningitis arrives.

If too much blood flows into the head but has not yet reached the level of causing a headache, and this situation cannot be improved over a long period of time, the function of the brain cells will also be slowly affected. Your scalp often feels hot; reactive oxygen species (ROS) may attack the hair follicle cells, causing hair loss; your face becomes red and hot. In traditional Chinese medicine it is said that the heart

belongs to fire and its representative color is red. This is why people with heart problems often develop a flushed face. The eyes become bloodshot, and then the eyeballs begin to swell.

If physical activity increases or when you eat, blood pressure rises even higher and more blood flows into the head. In order to reduce the pressure, the body begins to sweat—the sweat all comes from the blood. The result is that the blood pressure does decrease, but this is merely a poisonous short-term remedy. As the water in the blood is discharged, the blood becomes more viscous; within this thickened blood, solid substances accumulate in the capillaries. If this accumulation and blockage occur in the brain's capillaries, then there is cerebral congestion or stroke.

If your head sweats when you eat, you should realize that there is something wrong with your body! Typically, overweight people start sweating as soon as they eat, and feel drowsy after finishing the meal.

Of the three situations mentioned above, the first two are relatively easy to resolve—if there is a lack of glucose in the blood, just eat more! People with low blood sugar usually carry sugar in their bags and eat some when they feel dizzy. If there is a lack of oxygen, train your breathing and practice deep breathing. However, the problem of rising intracranial blood pressure is not so simple! It is not merely an issue of breathing, but also involves other factors, including psychological ones.

As for the issue of blood pressure, we will discuss it in the next section.

For those who actually practice, my articles are priceless treasures. Each time you read one, the likelihood of encountering obstacles in your practice decreases a little.

For those who only indulge in empty talk of Buddhist theory without practice, I am merely someone popularizing medical science, and the more I speak, the further it seems from Buddhist Dharma. That only shows your ignorance.

What I am talking about now is the Four Noble Truths, the most fundamental Buddhist Dharma. Having a physical body is suffering. We practice meditation in order to free ourselves from the bondage of the physical body, but in doing so we encounter various meditation-induced disorders—this is the Truth of Suffering. I explain to you one by one the causes of these meditation-induced disorders—this is the Truth of The Origin of Suffering. I then tell you how to resolve these problems—this is the Truth of The Cessation of Suffering. Once you understand all of these and practice in accordance with the Dharma, you can realize the path—this is the Truth of The Path.

After reading the previous theoretical explanations of the Three Realms and the Fourth Dhyana, and understanding the advantages and disadvantages of the various Dharma methods, you can be said to have attained sudden enlightenment. "Sudden enlightenment in theory, extinguishment starts from form"—this is an original quotation from the sutras. The physical body is form! If you do not understand the physical body, how can you extinguish form?

Bookworms only make issues of books all day long. Even if you were to tear the sutras into pages and swallow them all, you would still be ordinary beings, still like a bacterium. Practice is doing action what one preaches with the body; liberation from samsara cannot be attained through empty theorizing.

The Diamond Sutra was spoken for persons of average spiritual capacity! Do you know what level those persons of average spiritual capacity were at in the Buddha's time?

In that era, Sravakas (Sound-Hearers), Pratyekabuddhas (enlightened by contemplation on Dependent Arising), and Praetyka-Buddhas (Solitary-Buddhas) were all persons of inferior spiritual capacity; Arhats were persons of average spiritual capacity; and Bodhisattvas were persons of superior spiritual capacity. In the Diamond Sutra, Subhuti, who dialogued with the Buddha, was in the realm of Arhats.

The entire Diamond Sutra is about the discriminating mind of the Arhat! If you are not an Arhat, then do not use the Diamond Sutra to talk to us—it is completely meaningless! Your understanding of the Diamond Sutra is entirely mistaken, merely random conjecture based on the shallow wisdom of ordinary beings.

The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment speaks of three types of meditation: Samatha, Samapatti, and dhyana (meditative absorption). These three types are then combined into more than twenty methods of practice. Later the sutra describes the realms attained after completing these meditations. If you have not cultivated these three kinds of meditation to the utmost, to the realm of breaking through meditation, then do not use the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment to speak with us. It is completely meaningless; all of your understanding is wrong.

Those who come here to ask about Dharma are all ordinary beings who have not even extinguished sexual desire and are still in the stage of not yet having attained dhyana. If they were to die now, whether they could even undergo reincarnation as human beings would still be in question.

If I acted like those bookworms, whenever people asked about various meditation-induced disorders I merely quoted sutras about this emptiness and that emptiness, my posts would have long since sunk out of sight, and no one would like to read them.

I only guide those who actually practice. Those who do not practice, please go elsewhere. That is all I have to say. Any further attempts to use sutras to argue will simply be deleted without reply.

If you feel I am arrogant, that only shows your spiritual capacities are inferior!

Persons of superior spiritual capacity can be beaten and scolded, and for the sake of seeking Dharma they can endure any pain and humiliation. Persons of average spiritual capacity must be guided with various skillful means and be encouraged from time to time so that they do not lose confidence. Persons of inferior spiritual capacity can only be treated with courtesy and be kept at a distance away.

There are also worse people, who cannot bear to see others do well. Their envy, jealousy, and hatred are extremely heavy, and they slander everyone everywhere, only to suffer the karmic retribution themselves. If you think you are so remarkable, start your own posts to expound Dharma. If no one reads them, that simply shows that you are not that great and lack the wisdom and meritss to attract others.

I am not here to engage in equal exchange with anyone. I am here to point out the path for those who actually practice, using my experience and the realms I have attained to serve later practitioners!

You may compile my posts into a book and look up the medical terms I do not understand and insert them accordingly—that also counts as a merit! But do not use this to seek profit. It is acceptable to recover your costs and compensate your work, but any additional income should be used to do good deeds.

Section 03: Blood Pressure

Continuing from the above, let us talk about blood pressure.

As soon as blood pressure rises, regardless of the glucose and oxygen levels in your blood, it causes great harm to brain cells. Once the capillaries in the brain expand, they squeeze the surrounding brain cells; The sensation begins with pressure and swelling in the head, gradually worsening—leading to headache, then cerebral hemorrhage, and ultimately death.

So how is blood pressure formed?

When we are still in the womb, there is no blood pressure in the practical sense. Although the heart is beating, the circulation of blood is driven by the mother's blood pressure. Blood enters the baby's liver through the umbilical cord, then flows into the heart, then throughout the whole body, and finally still flows out along the umbilical cord. At this time, the baby's lungs remain collapsed. The heart beats on its own without any load and is not responsible for the physical work of pumping blood.

When the baby comes into this world, the external atmospheric pressure of 760 mmHg forces air into the baby's lungs. As the lungs expand, they press the diaphragm downward. In addition, adults will often turn the baby upside down and pat its buttocks; this frightens the baby, the abdominal muscles contract, and the viscera in the abdominal cavity are subjected to enormous pressure. Three quarters of the volume of a person's blood is in the abdominal cavity; when the abdominal cavity contracts like this, blood is squeezed out of the abdominal cavity and sent into the heart. This is the cause of the initial formation of blood pressure.

An obstetrician once wrote a paper specifically on the issue of infant blood pressure. When a baby is just born, if its blood pressure is between 30 mmHg and 60 mmHg, it is a relatively normal baby; but some babies have blood pressure exceeding 60 mmHg, and such babies are destined to struggle with illness for their entire lives.

The doctor's paper ends here—why is it like this? Is there no further explanation ?

We need to know that as soon as a thought arises, the muscles will stiffen and contract; the more the mind is emptied, the more relaxed the muscles become.

The reason why a baby's blood pressure exceeds 60 mmHg is actually very simple. A baby in the womb is also conscious and can hear the sounds outside. If the mother is stimulated or subjected to external blows, the baby will also be frightened. With this fright, the emotion of fear arises, the baby's abdominal muscles begin to tense up, and blood pressure rises. Therefore, we require pregnant women to relax as much as possible: do not be stimulated, do not look at disturbing sights, and do not get anxious. If a pregnant woman is stimulated and various emotions of suffering arise, the brain will secrete corresponding

hormones; these hormones will also enter the fetus, causing the fetus's abdominal muscles to contract, and blood pressure will already start to rise before birth.

Observe the baby further. From birth, for six consecutive weeks, the baby's blood pressure rises a little every day, until it rises to the normal adult values of 110 mmHg or 120 mmHg. What does this show? It shows that from the moment the baby leaves the womb, the body is gradually becoming stiff bit by bit. The stiffness of the body proves that the baby's thoughts are increasing and various afflictions are beginning to accumulate. Therefore, from the moment of birth, human life is suffering, until death.

Now that we understand how blood pressure is formed, let us look at how blood flows.

The heart is connected to six blood vessels. There are the superior artery and superior vein, which are the vessels that deliver blood to the head; there are also the inferior artery and inferior vein, which pass through the diaphragm and deliver blood to the viscera and lower limbs below the heart; and there are the lung artery and lung vein, which are used to send blood into the lungs for oxygen exchange.

The way this blood flows is different between babies and adults.

A baby's belly is round and bulging, and abdominal pressure is low. Therefore, after blood leaves the heart, it first flows down into the abdominal cavity, and only the remaining blood then flows up to the brain.

As the baby gradually grows, afflictions increase, and the abdominal muscles begin to slowly stiffen and contract. At the same time, the baby begins to eat continually, the viscera gradually increase in volume, and abdominal pressure gradually rises. When abdominal pressure exceeds a certain point, blood first flows toward the head and then toward the abdomen, because the pressure above is lower than the abdominal pressure. When the blood flows back toward the heart, the situation is exactly the opposite: high abdominal pressure causes the blood from the abdomen to flow into the heart first, and only after that does blood from the head flow in. Blood flowing toward the brain goes up first but comes down later, resulting in slow blood circulation in the brain. The brain begins to lack glucose and oxygen, so it sends commands to the heart, telling it to increase the amount of blood and deliver more blood to the brain—intracranial blood pressure will then gradually rise. Under slow blood circulation, reactive oxygen species (ROS) will appear and begin to corrode the surrounding brain cells, causing inflammation of the brain cells.

Touch and feel your own belly, especially the abdominal muscles around the navel. If you have too many delusions in your mind and your emotions fluctuate greatly, the muscles here will stiffen and contract, and feel very hard to the touch. When abdominal pressure rises, blood will first go to the brain, causing intracranial blood pressure to rise.

This phenomenon has nothing to do with the blood pressure reading in your arm. Even if the blood pressure in your arm is within the normal range, intracranial blood pressure may still be outside the normal range.

When practitioners sit in meditation, they may experience Qi and blood rushing upward, head swelling and headache—blood pressure is the fundamental cause.

Various causes can make your body stiff so that the abdominal muscles cannot expand normally. As a result, abdominal pressure rises, and the pressure in the inferior vein becomes higher than that in the

superior vein. Blood returning from the abdomen will first fill the heart, and only when there is a gap will blood from the superior vein be allowed to flow down. When blood stays in the brain for a long time, reactive oxygen species (ROS) also appear, and the brain is still commanding the heart to increase pressure. In this way, it becomes a vicious cycle that intensifies continuously.

How can we solve the problem of blood pressure?

Still by practicing breathing. When you open up the abdominal muscles and compress the volume of the viscera so that abdominal pressure drops, blood will first flow down into the abdomen and then up to the head. This makes the brain cells feel very comfortable, and consciousness becomes very clear and refreshing. Sufficient oxygen will make the lower abdomen warm—the ancients called this phenomenon "water ascending and fire descending".

The atmospheric pressure outside is 760 mmHg, and the pressure in the chest is about 755 mmHg. If your abdominal pressure is below 700 mmHg, then you are a very remarkable practitioner—your body will be very healthy. Without taking psychological factors into account, entering into dhyana will also be quite easy.

Section 04: Blood Circulation

Above we have talked about blood pressure; this time we will talk about the principles of blood circulation.

Our heart is connected to six major blood vessels. The superior artery and superior vein are responsible for sending blood to the head; the inferior artery and inferior vein are responsible for sending blood to the viscera and lower limbs below the diaphragm; the lung artery and lung vein are responsible for sending blood to the lungs for gas exchange. Among these six blood vessels, the three vessels that send blood from the heart outward—the superior artery, the inferior artery, and the lung artery—each have valves. When the heart pumps the blood and sends it out, these valves close, preventing blood from flowing back into the heart. This is roughly how the heart works.

So how should we manage the lungs in order to allow blood to enter the lungs more smoothly? If you do not understand breathing, even if you sit for a hundred years, you may still not be able to enter into deeper dhyana you will drag down your body before you ever enter into deeper dhyana. The body is the treasure vessel that carries us to the other shore; once the body fails, you are basically cut off from practice.

When the Buddha taught the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, is the first content—mindfulness of the body—really just contemplation of impurity of the body?

No! The Buddha advised beginners to deeply observe the body and carefully feel the subtle changes of the body, drawing all scattered attention onto the body instead of grasping external conditions. Contemplation of the impurity of the body is for the sake of arousing renunciation. Aspiration and actual practice are not the same: aspiration can drive practice, but relying only on aspiration without actual practice cannot bring liberation from samsara.

To return to the topic: in order to inhale enough oxygen, we must activate the lower half of the lungs.

However, some people expand the lungs sideways; this is reverse abdominal breathing. In this case, lung capacity may increase to a certain degree, and one can inhale more air than usual, but there are fatal side effects.

If the diaphragm does not descend and you simply keep expanding the lungs sideways, the volume of the lungs will gradually increase, lung pressure will become higher and higher, and will exceed external atmospheric pressure; at that point, the amount of air you can inhale reaches its limit. Moreover, such high lung pressure will prevent blood from smoothly entering the lungs through the lung artery, so the amount of oxygen the body can absorb is limited.

Not only that, when the volume of the lungs becomes too large, it compresses the heart in the middle, and the beating of the heart is hindered. At the same time, the movement range of the diaphragm is too small, and blood circulation in the viscera becomes slow. Without the diaphragm powerfully pressing down, blood cannot be sent into the heart in time, causing the lower limbs to be icy cold and the lower abdomen to be cold as well. Women will have uterine cold and kidney deficiency; in terms of kidney deficiency, men and women are the same.

Look at swimmers: after they retire, their probability of developing heart disease is quite high, and some athletes actually die of heart disease. Why is that? When people swim, what they are practicing is reverse abdominal breathing. The lower limbs must paddle the water rapidly, the abdominal muscles cannot relax, and are kept in a state of tension and contraction the entire time. But they also need large amounts of oxygen, so they can only resort to reverse abdominal breathing. Expanding the lungs sideways in this way compresses the heart; over time, this affects the heart's normal beating, and in the end, they develop heart disease and die.

The conclusion is: reverse abdominal breathing can only be used as a transitional method before abdominal breathing; it must not be practiced for long periods—doing so can be fatal. Earlier I did not write down these crucial points. Some people find abdominal breathing difficult and want to practice reverse abdominal breathing over the long term just to obtain more oxygen—this is very dangerous.

You must learn abdominal breathing as soon as possible! Only this kind of breathing method can make your body healthy and allow you to go further on the path of practice.

Before a person enters samadhi (deep meditative concentration), the breathing will gradually become deeper: once per minute, or even once every three minutes; the mind becomes increasingly empty, and breathing becomes deeper. The diaphragm descends to a great extent, pressing the viscera downward, and abdominal pressure then rises. In this way, blood is very smoothly sent back to the heart, then to the lungs, and then throughout the whole body. The burden on the heart is greatly reduced, and so the heart rate gradually slows down—slow heartbeat is also a prerequisite for entering samadhi (deep meditative concentration).

If you have not trained your body into this kind of condition and merely sit blindly waiting for samadhi (deep meditative concentration), the final result is dragging your body down.

When your attention is highly concentrated, you cannot perceive subtle changes in the body, breathing becomes abnormal, and blood circulation is obstructed. The brain, due to lack of oxygen, will produce hallucinations. Reactive oxygen species (ROS) begin to corrode brain cells and the viscera; the viscera then become inflamed—people sit and sit, and the body begins to rot from the inside. I have previously seen monks who have been a Buddhist monk for more than thirty years and practiced Zen for more than twenty years whose bodies actually smell foul—this is precisely because the viscera have become inflamed and begun to rot.

If you do not practice breathing properly and do not regulate blood circulation well, then the more diligently you practice, the faster you will die.

Here I teach everyone prostration, breathing practice, and sitting meditation. These three methods of practice must be effectively combined. Practicing only one will produce bad consequences; if you only practice prostration or only exercise desperately, you will injure tendons and bones.

You may not notice it, but when the rate at which tendons and bones are damaged exceeds the body's rate of self-repair, damage will accumulate bit by bit and erupt when you are old. Look at national-level athletes—their glory is always temporary; when they retire and grow old, the aftereffects of their youthful injuries begin to reveal themselves—athletes spend their whole lives struggling against injury and pain and die in that struggle.

If you do 500 to 1000 prostrations a day, that is still acceptable. But if you do more than 3000 prostrations a day without using sitting meditation and deep breathing to repair the body, you will still end up dragging your body down.

If you only practice breathing, head swelling and dizziness will come very quickly. Especially when practicing while sitting, it is very easy to become distracted; at such times, the likelihood of damage to brain cells increases dramatically.

If you only practice sitting in meditation, and sit for more than eight hours a day, then unless you have already fully trained your body, you will die faster and more thoroughly. When blood circulation is not smooth, reactive oxygen species (ROS) will corrode your viscera, your knees, and your hip joints; your brain cells will also be damaged.

Therefore, without systematic learning, blind practice is worse than not practicing at all.

Beginners must combine these three methods of practice and advance step by step. First, focus on prostration and jogging and other exercises—first strengthen cardiopulmonary function; then practice breathing—this will greatly reduce the likelihood of adverse phenomena; once breathing practice is fairly well developed, begin sitting in meditation—but you still must do prostration. At the beginning of sitting in meditation, blood circulation is obstructed, and circulation in the legs and in the viscera is poor—you must still exercise every day to speed up blood circulation, ensuring that the body does not suffer internal injury.

Section 05: Nerves and Fascia

Today's topic is beginning to move to a higher level!

You may not have reached this level yet, but I'm writing it down first and leaving it for you all—so that even if I'm no longer around, you won't end up blindly groping your way forward.

Let us review the previous stages of practice. First, to clear the meridian channels throughout the entire body, each session of sitting meditation needs to last for two hours. The sequence for repairing the body is as follows: skin → muscles → viscera → tendons → bones.

The repair of the tendons and bones comes last—it usually starts to take effect when the sitting meditation lasts more than 90 minutes up to 120 minutes—so it is essential to persist for two full hours!

If you sit in meditation for one hour, you can repair the muscles and viscera—then Qi will flow smoothly, and you will feel very comfortable while sitting.

But, after some time, the tendons and bones will begin to ache. Under normal circumstances, the most damaged tendons and bones in the human body are at the ankles; going upward, at the knees and the hip joints; and in the upper body, at the back of the neck. The condition of the back of your neck is related to your daily habits: the more time you spend sitting in front of a computer or playing with your mobile phone for long periods, the more severe the damage to your cervical spine will be. It takes two to three years to repair all of the bones, and only then can you enter the Dhyana in the Desire Realm.

Next, on the level of consciousness, you begin to focus on extinguishing sexual desire, and on the level of the body, you enter the stage of activating the nervous system.

1. Nervous System

The focus of this section is the human nervous system—how it operates, and how it relates to the mind. From here onward, some of the ideas may differ from current medical theories!

We are practitioners; our observation and understanding of the body advance beyond that of medicine. Since ancient times, enlightened beings have not only attained absolute physical health, but also been miracle-working physicians, whose knowledge of the human body has far exceeded the limitations of their times. However, modern medicine did not exist back then, so they had to describe the human body according to the cognitive standards of their day. That is why many of their descriptions seem like superstition from the perspective of modern people.

Let us get back to the main topic and first take a look at what the nervous system is like.

Human nerve cells are all slender and elongated. It is said that if you were to pull out all the nerve cells and connect them into a single line, it could circle the earth twice. The conduction speed of signals within nerve cells is 20 meters per second.

Modern medicine holds that the main neural pathway of human beings is inside the spine, descending along the spine and controlling all parts of the body. However, from our practitioners' perspective, this main pathway is only responsible for transmitting the sympathetic nerves and is used to control the voluntary muscles; that is to say, it only controls movements that can be governed by mental intention.

From the perspective of a practitioner like me, there is another nervous system that descends from the area behind both ears, follows the neck into the region behind the collarbone, and spreads out in a mesh-like

pattern to connect the muscles between all the ribs. When it connects to the outside chest muscles in the upper part, the sympathetic nerves are responsible for controlling muscle movement; while the muscles between the ribs in the back are connected with another nervous system. This system extends all the way down to the abdominal muscles of the lower abdomen and then inward to connect with all the viscera. The sphincters of the anus and penis are connected with the sympathetic nerves of the back.

For ordinary healthy people, among these two systems, the sympathetic nerves in the spine appear to be all alive, but they are not entirely so actually; a large portion of the nerves remain dormant. As for the parasympathetic nervous system in the front of the body, most of it remains dormant.

For those who do not engage in practice, it is very difficult to sense how activated these nervous systems are; but for those whose practice has progressed to the point of having cleared the meridian channels throughout the entire body, the degree of which these nervous systems are activated determines whether you can enter deeper levels of dhyana.

After you have completely cleared the meridian channels throughout the entire body and repaired the entire body—even the bones, after entering into dhyana you will begin to feel agitated during your sitting meditation.

There are two reasons for this agitation. One is that your emotion of suffering arises. There is no method to deal with this; it can only be gradually worn away through long-term practice. The other reason is that your nerve cells have not been activated: the brain cells feel uneasy and begin to produce corresponding hormones that make you feel uneasy, and the brain cells also keep issuing orders without stopping—this too prevents you from calming your mind and entering into deeper dhyana.

It is absolutely impossible to perceive such a feeling for anyone who has not actually attained this level through practice—here I only expound the Dharma and pave the way for practitioners who engage in actual practice, and do not argue with bookworms.

Let us look at the relationship between the brain and the nerve cells.

How would you feel if you wanted to move your fingers but they just wouldn’t move? Wouldn’t you start to feel agitated?

What about stroke patients who want to move their bodies but cannot—how do they feel? They wear a worried expression day after day and are prone to irritability and anger.

This kind of situation absolutely cannot be solved by the theory of emptiness—“let go of this, let go of that, this emptiness, that emptiness”—none of it is of the slightest use!

The human body is an integrated whole and is also a manifestation transformed from consciousness—it is inseparable from consciousness as a whole.

To use an analogy: if the brain is the commander, the other parts of the body are the troops stationed outside, and the nerve cells are the communications soldiers. The task of transmitting orders is not accomplished by a single soldier; many communications soldiers relay the orders in succession to complete it.

The commander issues an order, communications soldiers begin relaying the order and pass it all the way to the troops outside; the troops immediately act according to the order and then report the result of their actions back to the communications soldiers; the communications soldiers relay this information back to the commander, and after the commander receives the information and analyzes it, new orders are issued. This is a normal cycle. Even if the commander does not issue orders, the communications soldiers still continuously report information about the troops outside to the commander. When the commander has a grasp of all the information, the commander feels assured and at ease.

If a problem occurs somewhere in the middle and the communications soldiers at some point die, the order, once transmitted to that point, can no longer be passed further on. From the commander's perspective, what will the situation look like? The communications soldiers who receive orders from the commander are alive, so the commander will think that the communications soldiers should be fine and that the problem must lie with the troops outside. What then? The commander becomes very agitated and angry and begins issuing orders to the communications soldiers without stopping, insisting on finding out the situation of the troops outside.

The relationship between human brain cells and nerve cells is just like this. When the commands issued by the brain cells fail to reach their intended destinations, the brain cells start sending signals continuously—these commands take the form of bioelectrical signals. An excess of such signals can cause the body to become stiff, and the body begins secreting hormones of unease and agitation, making you increasingly agitated.

When your sitting meditation reaches a certain depth, you may feel your body becoming extremely comfortable. As you begin to sense your body more subtly, you also notice a heightened clarity of consciousness. Then, all of a sudden, a wave of unease arises—and this emotion intensifies, growing into agitation so strong that you can no longer continue sitting. This sensation reaches its peak when the nerve at the Jade Pillow (Yuzhen) point feels as if it's about to connect—but not quite. The agitation suddenly flares up, your chest feels increasingly stifled, and you're forced to stop meditating.

When you have been sitting in meditation to a certain level, all of a sudden your consciousness becomes extremely comfortable, you feel as if a heavy burden has been removed, a feeling of joy arises, and you may even shed tears. At that moment, it is that some nerve cells in a certain part of your body have been activated and can now connect with the brain.

So how can we rapidly activate the nerve cells?

Above we have already discussed the mechanisms of breathing, the way the lungs and heart work, how blood pressure forms and affects the brain, how blood flows, how the brain works, and how the nervous system influences the brain. That is quite a bit of material, but if you wish to stay off detours in practice and drive straight along the expressway toward the destination, you must understand all of this. When a situation occurs in your body, you must immediately find out the root cause, and make adjustments accordingly instead of fantasizing about nebulous notions such as where the aura is good, which Dharma practice site carries spiritual energy, whether you have karmic obstacles, or whether outer demons are making trouble.

Where is there so-called spiritual energy?

It’s simple! Anywhere with a high oxygen level—ignorant people call that "having spiritual energy." Practicing at temples in the mountains yields quicker results than doing so in the city—after all, the air there is much fresher!

What are karmic obstacles?

When your practice reaches a certain level, illnesses generated by karmic obstacles will erupt abruptly. Yesterday you were fine, but today you are suddenly in excruciating pain—that is the arrival of karmic obstacles. If you keep practicing sitting meditation day after day but your condition keeps deteriorating—that indicates there is something wrong with your practice method. You must promptly adjust aspects such as your physical strength, mental state, posture, and eating habits.

What is an outer demon invasion?

External demons truly exist! But you have to be someone worthy of their attention—those who haven’t even cleared their meridian channels won’t be of any interest to external demons at all.

Therefore, practitioners must place their attention on the changes within their own bodies and on their day-to-day activities and practice.

Also, limit your time online and on your mobile phone—this affects the back of the neck. Once the nerves at the back of the neck become stiff and lose their vitality, it is absolutely impossible to enter dhyana.

Today's content is even newer; modern medicine has only just begun to research it, and the results are not impressive—they merely scratch the surface.

The speed of nerve cells signal transmission is 20 meters per second. If you accidentally kick the leg of a table and your body jolts, you immediately know something has happened, but you have to wait a short moment for that pain signal to transmit to your brain before you actually feel the pain. Everyone has had this kind of experience; if you haven’t, just go kick a wall and see for yourself.

From this perspective, that transmission speed is reliable. If a person is two meters tall, the transmission time is 0.1 seconds—this time lag is real.

But if you take part in athletic sports, is this figure still accurate?

We watch a basketball game. Athletes are generally over 2 meters tall. If he sees the ball flying above toward his head, his eyes capture the sight, the optic nerve transmits the signal to the brain, and the brain analyzes it before sending commands to his entire body, all the way down to his toes. We can ignore the time taken for this process. Suppose it takes 0.1 seconds for the body to react after the brain sends the command—speaking only of this interval—would basketball still be playable?

Take table tennis, which is even faster-paced than basketball. The ball can travel back and forth across the table within just one second. If it takes you 0.1 seconds to react, would you still be able to hit the ball?

Therefore, the speed of 20 meters-per-second only accounts for the time it takes for bodily sensations to reach the brain, not to the time between the brain issuing an order and the body responding.

Our bodies are not that slow-witted; they have a system that reacts synchronously with the brain, which controls the nerves. When someone next to you suddenly raises their hand to hit you, your eyes register the movement, the optic nerve transmits the message to the brain, the brain processes it, and then sends signals to your arm. Based on a transmission speed of 20 meters per second, it would take about 0.05 seconds for your arm to lift up to block the blow—and by then, you would definitely get hit first.

Therefore, there is a system that responds together with the brain. When the brain receives information from the optic nerves, this system reacts alongside the brain, directly controls the arm's nerves, causes the nerves to contract the muscles, the muscles move the bones, and the arm rises. The whole process does not wait for the brain to react and issue a command. This system is the fascia—most people have probably never heard of this before!

2. Fascia

What exactly is fascia?

Look at the human body: on its surface is the skin, under the skin is fat, beneath the fat is muscle, and there is a thin fascia between the muscle and the fat. Just take a look at pork or beef—that thin membrane wrapping around the meat under the fat is exactly what we're talking about. It is most noticeable in beef; when the beef is cooked thoroughly, you can cut off this fascia together with the meat and eat it—it is extremely tasty. Although I haven't eaten meat for over a decade, I still remember its flavor.

Inside the human body, this fascia forms a layer that runs from head to toe. It even exists beneath the scrotal skin and around the anus. In the female body, the fascia follows the vagina inward until even the inner wall of the uterus is wrapped.

There are no nerves in this fascia, but it has many small pores that contain capillaries connecting the outer skin and the inner muscles; the blood vessels pass through the muscles and the peritoneum all the way to the viscera, forming an integrated circulatory system.

Although the fascia has no nerves of its own, it can control the nerves inside the muscles below and react in synchrony with the brain. When the muscle expands, the fascia merely sends a signal; but when the muscle contracts, the contraction is accomplished through the fascia's tightening.

These are two functions of fascia: one is to synchronize with the brain and control the nerves within the muscles; the other is to contract the muscles. The fascia is highly resilient and can contract and expand dramatically.

When we are first born, all the fascia and nerves are vital and functional. When we breathe, our entire abdomen moves in unison. However, as we grow older, our breathing gradually shifts to thoracic breathing. The abdominal fascia, which remains unused for long periods of time, begins to undergo rigid contraction and enters a semi-dormant state; the nerves in the abdominal muscles controlled by this fascia also become stiff and lose their vitality. As a result, the muscles lose their functionality and turn rigid.

When the fascia becomes stiff and loses its vitality, it will contract and pull the surrounding fascia toward itself. The initial area where the fascia stiffens and loses vitality is the small area just above the

penis! Take a look at your penis—isn't there a horizontal line above it? The same applies to women. This is where the fascia starts to stiffen and contract! Feel that area—isn't it quite hard?

When the fascia contracts into a linear band, it pulls the upper fascia downward layer by layer. This pull extends all the way to the chest: in women, it can cause the breasts to sag. Pulling further upward, it tugs at the collarbone, causing the collarbones to sink and the shoulders to hunch forward—just like how schoolchildren's shoulders hunch forward under the weight of heavy backpacks. As a result, the volume of the thoracic cavity decreases, making even thoracic breathing difficult; you will be out of breath after just a few steps. When the fascia in the chest becomes completely stiff and loses its ability to expand smoothly, any stimulus that makes you try to deepen your breathing will require lifting your chest bones. But the fascia clings tightly and refuses to release, causing a dull, oppressive pain across the entire chest. As you age, the fascia contracts more and more, forcibly hunching the entire front of the body into a stoop—and that is how you end up as a hunched elderly person!

If weakness in the spine and back were the sole reason for hunching, you should be able to straighten when lying flat; yet people who are stooped cannot fully extend even when lying down—serious cases can only sleep on their sides.

When the fascia contracts, the capillaries within it will close. Blood cannot be transported from the underlying muscles to the skin, leaving you with cold skin and chilly hands and feet. Over time, the rate of skin aging accelerates, and some skin cells die off—eventually, age spots will appear on the skin.

That's not all. The abdominal fascia clamps down tightly on the abdominal muscles, and you won't be able to perform abdominal breathing! Try taking a deep abdominal breath and see how much you can move your abdominal muscles. If someone can only move their upper abdominal muscles, it means that the fascia from the middle abdomen downward is stiff. By the same token, if you can move your lower abdominal muscles below the navel, it means that your fascia has basically regained its functionality.

When the abdominal muscles are tightly clamped down by the fascia, the nerves within the abdominal muscles will also lose their functionality and enter a semi-dormant state. Consequently, the brain cells become agitated and start to secrete stress hormones, leading to an increase in obsessive thoughts and worries. Since the abdominal muscles cannot expand, intra-abdominal pressure will rise; this causes elevated blood pressure in the lower body, and blood will rush upward to the brain first. As intracranial blood pressure increases, a sensation of Qi and blood surging upward will occur. Moreover, if the blood in the brain cannot circulate downward in a timely manner, ROS will be generated, which will then start to damage the brain cells. All of this is a chain reaction!

Therefore, fascia stiffness is a principal cause of illness.

The contraction and expansion of fascia also help with blood circulation. When fascia stiffens, stagnant heat will develop in various parts of the body because blood cannot flow normally. Traditional Chinese medicine uses cupping therapy and Gua sha (scraping therapy) both of which target the fascia. Both therapies relax the contracted fascia and speed up blood circulation. You have probably seen cupping

therapy, where the skin is drawn up by the cup and the fascia stretches. Gua sha（scraping therapy） is relatively less common.

Now you see the importance of activating the fascia: only when the abdominal fascia comes back to life can you perform abdominal breathing smoothly and trigger an entire series of positive reactions and progress in practice.

How can we activate the fascia quickly?

Exercise, of course. The fascia in our limbs is generally alive because we move the limbs often. The abdominal fascia is basically dead, so we should perform prostrations and do more sit-ups to activate it quickly.

Another method is to focus your attention on the abdomen during sitting meditation. Focus on the areas that cannot move so that more blood will flow into them to gradually activate the fascia. Once the fascia is activated and can expand smoothly, the muscles inside can swell.

With more abdominal exercises and abdominal breathing, the nerves within the abdominal muscles revive, and the brain feels comfortable.

When the fascia is activated and starts to expand, every so often you will feel some itch or slight discomfort under the skin; during sitting meditation you will unconsciously want to stretch.

Look at various paintings of Bodhidharma, there is one depicting him stretching his body. This is not a stretch he does after waking up from a sound sleep, but rather a movement he makes after sitting meditation—when his fascia has been fully relaxed and stretched. He does this stretch to shift the expanded fascia, so he stretches his body, then twists his arms and legs in the opposite direction, and moves his neck as well.

Bodhidharma discovered the secret of fascia! Originally, one would perform various movements to help fascia re-settle only after his fascia had been stretched and relaxed. However, Bodhidharma reversed the sequence by using a series of movements to quickly activate the fascia. He depicted these movements in illustrations and paired them with the corresponding mental method, and thus came into being YiJin Jing (Muscle/Tendons Change Classic), the treasure of Shaolin Temple.

Bodhidharma also discovered the secret of the nervous system! By observing the human body in depth, he mapped out and labeled all the key locations where important nerves pass through—and that was the human acupoint chart. Such charts existed even before him, including those from Taoism, but Bodhidharma's version was far more accurate and detailed.

Bodhidharma also invented a set of martial arts specifically targeting the nervous system! This was another Shaolin supreme skill—Shaolin Dim Mak (pressure point technique). With accurate acupoint identification paired with profound internal force, a divine skill capable of subduing enemies with a single strike came into being. Once specific nerve cells are accurately pressed, they will cease to function, rendering the corresponding parts of the body immobile. One can also channel their own internal force into the opponent's acupoints to block the normal flow of Qi; when Qi is obstructed, blood circulation will also be disrupted, leaving the opponent not only immobile but also increasingly numb.

A century after Bodhidharma's passing, many martial arts masters emerged from Shaolin Temple. Historical records, including unofficial accounts, confirm that true masters of Dim Mak did come from the temple. While some details of their life stories were exaggerated, the authenticity of their martial arts is beyond doubt—practitioners of Dim Mak still exist to this day. This is a testament to Bodhidharma's great foresight! Martial arts not only aid one's practice and unblock the meridians, but also enabled Shaolin Temple to defend itself during the turbulent war-torn eras.

Nowadays, martial artists focus more on their fighting skills while neglecting meditation. Little do they know that martial arts mastery is also built on the foundation of meditation! The deeper your meditation, the stronger your internal force, and you will stay calmer in battle, make more accurate judgments, and possess superior speed and explosive power compared to ordinary people.

I seem to have digressed. By the way, Bodhidharma is Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin).

As the fascia unfurls and stretches, it gradually moves upward all the way to the head. Having no more room to expand there, the fascia then starts to layer and fold at the crown of the head, causing a fleshy bump to protrude on the top of the head—this is the secret behind the Buddha's cranial protuberance (Ushnisha).

Go ahead and search through the Eighty Thousand Tripitaka to find where it explains the principle of Buddha's cranial protuberance! Since you don't actually practice but only recite scriptures and boast, you'll forever remain a mere bacterium. True practitioners will not bother to waste words on you.

I have now explained the principle of the Ushnisha; elsewhere I have explained why the arms lengthen and also the Characteristic of Well-Retracted Male Organ.

Among the Buddha’s thirty-two marks, some truly appear at birth, but others can be achieved through practice.

It seems I have written too much; let us stop here for today.

3. Nerves in the Dantian

Let us continue with the nerves in the Dantian.

We already know how to activate the Dantian nerves by expanding the fascia—but that alone is not enough.

The nervous system is an integrated whole with connections running from head to toe. The nerves in the lower abdominal muscles link directly to the nerve centers at the back of the neck—specifically, the area from the Yuzhen (Jade Pillow) acupoint at the back of the head down to the Dazhui acupoint below the neck, including the pituitary gland inside the brain. This area acts as a neural hub for the human body, where all signals that control the intentional muscles pass through. As explained earlier, intentional muscles refer to those that are controlled by one's mind.

When we first practice breathing, we use our mind to expand and contract the abdominal muscles. Once we’ve practiced enough, we no longer need to exert force while expanding the abdominal muscles; instead, we simply relax the muscles completely, and our abdomen will naturally protrude. We do need a

little force to contract the abdomen inward, and since we're using force, we have to control it with our mind. Such control requires signals sent from the brain through the back of the neck. Therefore, if the nerves in the back of the neck are not fully activated, the nerves in the abdominal muscles can never be fully activated either.

How do we activate the nerves at the back of the neck first?

The simplest way is to sleep without a pillow. When the head tilts back, the nerves there are not compressed; when the head bows forward, the nerves are compressed and eventually lose function.

What's more, do neck exercises regularly – don't spend hours on end glued to computers or phones! At the current pace of development, various neurological disorders will break out in large numbers in less than 20 years – all thanks to these phones! Just look at today's young people; they reach for their phones whenever they have a moment – what was internet gaming addiction a few years ago has now turned into phone addiction.

Putting the digression aside, let us focus on the nerves at the back of the neck.

Besides activating your nerves through neck exercises and proper posture, the other key thing is to empty your mind. The moment you start thinking, Qi surges upward to your head, and blood follows, rushing into your brain and the back of your neck. The dilation of capillaries compressing the nerves here, and putting pressure on the pituitary gland inside your skull.

Therefore, to activate the nerves at the back of the neck quickly, lie down without a pillow, think of nothing—just zone out or recite the Buddha's name while lying there.

For beginners, zoning out is even harder than chanting the Shurangama Mantra. Everything takes a process—do your best.

Once the back of your neck feels relaxed, the nerves in your lower abdominal muscles will also get activated. When you breathe, your lower abdomen moves comfortably, allowing ample oxygen to flow in, and your lower abdomen will start to feel warm.

Section 06: Dantian

After discussing nerves, let's now focus on the Dantian.

What is the function of the Dantian, and why do practitioners value it so highly?

As I always say, without actual practice you will never know the mysteries within it.

Whether you cultivate Buddhism or Taoism, the body is the same—and practice begins with adjusting the body. If the Dantian cannot be cleared, there is no dhyana and no enlightenment. That is why so many senior practitioners emphasize the Dantian repeatedly: breathing must use the Dantian, directing the flow of Qi starts from the Dantian, even speaking must be powered from the Dantian.

For those who've read a few sutras and presume to comprehend the Buddhist Dharma thoroughly—simply ask them: what is the function of the Dantian? If they can answer even a little from the perspective

of the body or consciousness, then they've truly put in some effort. Otherwise, they remain mere bookworms.

If you have already unblocked the Dantian and can enter the Second Dhyana or above, you need not even ask questions—one glance at someone's appearance and you know the answer.

Let us begin with the physical aspect.

Within the Dantian lie the small intestine and other organs—nothing seems special. The crucial structures are located not in the front abdominal region but adhere to the back near the spine: two great blood vessels, the abdominal aorta and the abdominal vena cava, each two centimeters in diameter. All the abdominal organs receive blood through these vessels. When they reach the tailbone, each divides into two branches that descend into the thighs.

Whether these two vessels are clear or blocked determines whether the Dantian is unblocked.

Abdominal aortic aneurysm occurs when circulatory dysfunction appears in the major artery before its bifurcation. The vessel swells, less blood reaches the lower limbs, the feet become cold, when blood fails to descend, it refluxes upward, elevating the intracranial blood pressure—the consequences I have described many times.

Press your navel hard with fingers. If you can feel a pulse inside, that is the beating of this major artery, synchronized with your heart. If you truly feel it, your abdominal muscles are extremely stiff. When abdominal muscles contract, they squeeze the organs inside, which in turn press on the large vessel. When you press the navel hard at that time, you further compress the vessel and can sense its throbbing.

For people whose abdominal muscles have not opened, this large vessel works hardly under constant compression. Less blood reaches the viscera and lower limbs, so blood goes to the head; when it cannot descend in time, reactive oxygen species (ROS) appear and corrode brain cells. Once the abdominal muscles open, more blood enters the abdominal cavity and lower limbs. The belly warms, the legs warm, and the head immediately becomes clear and cool—water ascending and fire descending is achieved. Hence the teaching: awareness arises from in the Dantian, and true nature is realized through the Dantian.

This is the first point: behind the lower abdomen lie the two crucial large vessels.

Second, it's still about the mechanics of breathing:point:when abdominal muscles relax, the diaphragm immediately descends. Ordinary people inhale only 300 to 500 cc of air per breath, and those with large lung capacity inhale about 700 cc. By practicing abdominal breathing, we let the diaphragm descend. Every centimeter the diaphragm descends adds another 300 cc of air. When abdominal breathing is mastered, the diaphragm can descend five centimeters, bringing almost 2,000 cc per breath—a staggering number. Highly cultivated practitioners can inhale 2,500 to 3,000 cc in a single breath, which allows breathing just once per minute or even once every three minutes.

Thus, when the abdominal muscles relax, the abundant oxygen intake suffices for restoring the entire body while also continuing the process of cellular recharge.

The third point is that the abdominal cavity is the only place in the body that can store large amounts of blood; other areas have very limited capacity.

First, the head—this has been discussed many times. Once blood rushes to the head, you experience swelling and headache, and problems arise in the eyes, ears, nose, and gums. If the brain's capillaries burst, you either die or become disabled.

Next, the thoracic cavity contains the lungs and heart. If blood volume in the lungs increases, lung pressure rises; the difference from external air pressure narrows, and breathing becomes difficult.

An increase in blood volume within the heart is most terrifying. The heart contains chambers; if the blood in them increases, pressure rises and the heartbeat struggles.

The heart is also a muscle. To beat it needs blood to supply glucose and oxygen. Besides the six great vessels that connect to the rest of the body, there are two vessels feeding the heart itself; they branch into countless capillaries that encase the heart like a fishing net. When blood volume in the chest increases, these capillaries within the heart's muscle expand, producing palpitations, rapid heartbeat, and irregular heartbeat—this is the source of many heart diseases.

If people whose internal cardiac pressure is already high receive only a burst of stimulation， their abdominal muscles would suddenly contract, a huge volume of blood in the abdomen rushes into the heart, and the internal vessels burst immediately. There is no time for vocalization—instantaneous fatality ensues.

Another area is the lower limbs. With their substantial muscle mass, one might think they could hold more blood—but the answer is no.

If a great volume of blood enters the legs but cannot exit promptly, varicose veins appear; reactive oxygen species (ROS) then erode surrounding cells, nerve cells, muscle cells, including the cartilage in joints—becoming crippled is only a matter of time.

Observe individuals with obesity—those engaged in occupations requiring standing for long periods, their chances of developing varicose veins are quite high. Their blood contains too much fat and is thick, requiring higher pressure to flow. They also love to eat, so the small intestines carry a lot of fat and retained feces, their abdominal pressure is high, the diaphragm is pushed upward, breathing quality is poor, and their heart beats faster than average. While standing, gravity helps blood flow downward, but returning upward requires overcoming gravity; the thick blood does not flow easily, so large amounts of blood pile up in the veins—that becomes varicose veins.

As a result, blood cannot go to the head, to the chest, or to the legs; the only place left is the arms. Yet the vessels for the arms branch from the superior artery that goes to the head, so blood must enter the brain before it reaches the arms.

Therefore, blood can only go to the abdominal cavity—any excess elsewhere leads to diseases. Firstly, within the abdominal cavity, we can create more space by opening the abdominal muscles. The small intestine is elastic and can hold a lot of blood, so three-quarters of the body's blood is in the abdominal cavity.

As mentioned earlier, the earliest manifestation of Qi is high-energy blood. Qi is produced from blood, and where blood is abundant is the Sea of Qi—hence, the Dantian is the Qi Hai.

Once the Dantian is cleared, substantial blood flow into the abdominal cavity, blood pressure in the brain and chest drops sharply, the head becomes refreshing, and the chest no longer feels tight. This is the prerequisite for entering into dhyana.

First, the Dantian contains the abdominal aorta; when the abdominal muscles open, water ascending and fire descending becomes possible.

Secondly, abdominal expansion enables substantial oxygen intake for bodily repair and the process of recharging the cells.

Third, only the Dantian can store large volumes of blood, drawing excess blood from elsewhere into the abdomen so the brain and chest feel comfortable.

Fourth, the most crucial aspect is the nerves. People do not understand nerves well, yet these nerves directly influence the state of consciousness.

At certain stages of practice, you hit bottlenecks: your emotions cannot settle, and you remain uneasy without knowing why. You do not deliberately worry about anything, yet the unease persists. Even monks develop depression and some commit suicide. Without understanding how the body works, blind practice rarely allows anyone to survive long enough to reach the Third Dhyana or higher.

When many nerves in your body enter a semi-dormant state, the brain keeps sending signals to check on them and secretes harmful hormones that cause unease, anxiety, and sadness. When the brain cells become exhausted from this, they themselves enter a semi-dormant state. As more brain cells do so, thinking ability, attention, and memory decline. Research shows that after age thirty, the brain begins to atrophy and the body grows stiffer; in old age many brain cells enter a semi-dormant state, eventually leading to dementia.

Since nerves are so important, what nerves exist in the Dantian?

This area is special—it contains both sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves. You can control them with intention; once you master abdominal breathing, it happens on its own even without deliberate thought.

What we must do is to activate the parasympathetic nerves in the lower belly—letting the abdomen participate in breathing by itself. Taoist practice holds that "when one meridian becomes unblocked, all meridians follow"; this foundational meridian refers specifically to the Dantian.

The nerves in the Dantian connect upward to the brain and downward directly to the nerves in the testicles. When the parasympathetic nerves here activate, blood flows into the abdominal muscles, their cells awaken, and the fascia relaxes. Then the nerves in the testicles activate, high-energy blood flows into them, and they begin secreting ample male hormones.

How important are these hormones?

Everyone knows: when these hormones circulate through the blood, every cell in the body gains vitality, you become energetic and need less sleep.

When male hormones enter the brain, the brain cells activate, become vibrant, and begin secreting hormones that benefit the body—the most important of which is growth hormone. Secreted by the pituitary gland, it helps people grow rapidly during childhood; after adulthood it continues to be secreted and serves to repair cells and accelerate their turnover, continually producing new cells to replace old ones.

Some scientists believe human cells can only renew around fifty times; others think that in theory they can renew indefinitely—provided the body with sufficient oxygen and glucose while detoxifying quickly enough to expel all ingested and inhaled toxins. Perfect detoxification would allow immortality.

From Buddhist doctrine, wherever there is birth there is death; immortality is impossible. But limiting renewal to only fifty times is inaccurate. As long as the brain cells keep secreting growth hormone, your aging slows dramatically. Living healthily to ninety, one hundred, or longer is entirely possible.

By utilizing male hormones to maintain robust vitality and growth hormones to sustain health and longevity—this is the first benefit you gain from practice. The older people get, the more they value health; someone who lives in pain every day cannot be happy no matter how much wealth or fame they possess.

The brain not only secretes growth hormone; it also produces various hormones that create happiness—so far six have been identified.

Take the happiness hormone as an example. When people obtain what they want, the brain releases it, relaxing the body, deepening the breath, and delivering more oxygen to the brain.

As people age, their bodies grow stiffer, their breathing worsens, and the brain becomes more oxygen-starved. Thus, the older you are, the more you need the happiness hormone. This explains why elders must restrain themselves after attaining what they desire.

Certain elderly individuals manifest pathological material obsessions, piling useful and useless items at home and in hallways, constantly picking things up outside, even rummaging through trash. Why? Their bodies need happiness hormones. Only when they acquire something they want does the brain secrete a small amount, and the mind becomes habituated, forming patterns of greed that grow heavier—only in that way can they obtain brief comfort and joy. Telling such people about emptiness or Dharma is utterly useless.

Gambling is the same. After ten or twenty rounds, people develop the habit of guessing the outcomes. During the process of guessing and waiting, the brain secretes another hormone—its name escapes me, but you can find it online (dopamine). That hormone also relaxes the body, lifts the mood, and creates excitement. When the result comes and you win, you obtain the desired stake and the brain secretes happiness hormones again. Thus, regardless of your purity, if you gamble, you are destined to fall in; conventional methods cannot break it.

To eradicate greed and abstain from gambling, the fundamental solution lies in enabling the brain's autonomous secretion of these hormones! When your brain naturally produces all the beneficial hormones, your mindset shifts completely. You already feel happy, already feel content, and your desires naturally decrease. In the past, receiving money would make you very happy; now, even when you get money, the

amount of happiness hormone your brain secretes doesn't change much—because it was already secreting enough to begin with. As a result, your craving gradually fades away!

This is the principle of regulating the mind through the body: make the body comfortable and healthy so the brain keeps secreting good hormones, and you feel content and happy, eliminating external cravings for fame or wealth.

To accomplish this, the key is to unblock the Dantian, activate all its nerves, and connect the nerves of the testicles with those of the brain. Then you take another step toward enlightenment.

Now consider this from the perspective of the Yang Spirit.

For ordinary people, there is a central gravity point formed by emotions in the Danzhong area, and outside a gravitational point formed by attention in the head. Scattered attention turns the flow of Yang-spirit substance into chaotic entanglement.

To gather dispersed Yang spirit substance and form it into wheel-like circulation, you should create another gravitational point along the head-Danzhong axis, using three gravitational points to condense the Yang spirit substance. Keep the distances between the middle point and the two outer points equal so the Yang spirit substance converges. With sustained practice, the scattered Yang spirit substance gradually returns to the central vertical plane and begins forming a wheel-like vortex. This principle is straightforward and easily comprehensible. The practice method is to focus on the Dantian! Before clearing the Meridian Channels, use the Dantian contemplation to balance the Yang spirit substance.

When you gather all six sense faculties—eyes not seeing, ears not hearing, nose and mouth resting—the strength of the gravitational point in the head gradually decreases. If at this moment you still focus intensely on the Dantian, placing strong attention there, the gravitational point at the Dantian will overpower the one in the head. In this way, the body will gradually become stiff starting from the Dantian, making it impossible to enter into meditation. Therefore, the method of contemplating the Dantian can only reach the First Dhyana, can only be used to clear the Meridian Channels, and cannot be used for long-term practice.

Thus, there are five points regarding the importance of the Dantian in practice—I will not repeat the summary here.

Chapter 7: Supernatural Powers

Section 01: The Power of Knowing Past and Future Lives

Let us begin with the first: the power of knowing past and future lives.

At first, delusion arises within the Eighth Consciousness, and then the Seventh Consciousness, the mind of discrimination, appears. By this mind of discrimination, delusions are divided into segments, and then attachment arises toward one particular segment. The beginning and end of that segments of delusion is birth-and-death.

Why can’t people remember their past lives? Because you have attachment to the present life—this life. You are too focused on this life, so you cannot see past lives or future lives. It is like staring at one place—you won't be able to see anything else around you. Therefore, if you want the power of knowing past and future lives and want to see past lives and future lives, you must let go of your attachment to this life.

Let us analyze this life more deeply.

All of us live in the present. Using the present as the baseline, we can divide time into the past and the future. At this moment we are alive, so the past can be seen as the process of living your way here; at some moment in the future, we will all die, so the future can be seen as the process of dying your way out—living your way here, dying your way out.

Birth and death exist simultaneously like the two sides of a coin! But when we practice to extinguish birth-and-death, there is an order: we first extinguish birth, then extinguish death.

Why are people born?

Sentient beings below the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm are all born from sexual desire, so sexual desire is the cause of birth. Therefore, if you want to see the process of being born, first extinguish this cause of birth—sexual desire.

When you enter the Dhyana in the Desire Realm through meditation, you may be able to see the images of your past lives even if you have not yet extinguished sexual desire completely. When sexual desire is fully extinguished, these images become coherent and correspond one by one with what you have experienced in this life. You can only see past lives that have karmic ties with this life; you cannot see parts that have no relation. Moreover, this ability to see past lives requires no technique at all—these images will surface on their own.

Seeing your own past lives is a necessary process in practice! If a person cannot even see his own past lives, talking about enlightenment is nothing but nonsense! If you have practiced meditation for many years but still have not seen past lives, that can only mean your sexual desire has not been extinguished.

As long as you can come into contact with Buddhist Dharma and practice, you are a person with great meritss—such people have plans before they are born!

Only those with little meritss—people who work hard all day for a living and are tormented by illness—are dragged along by their own karmic forces and have not the slightest say in it.

Extinguishing sexual desire, and you can see the past!

Then how do you see the future?

The future is the process of dying. You must extinguish the cause of death in order to see the future. A person has a physical body and therefore must die!

Then what counts as eliminating the cause of death?

It is to extinguish attachment to the body—which is attention! If you still have attachment to the body, that means you fear death—people who fear death cannot see the future.

Think about it: if you saw that you would be hit by a car and die when you go out tomorrow, could you still go out as usual? If you fear death, you would not go out! If you were allowed to see the future, it would break the karmic law (cause-and-effect law) of the universe. Not seeing it is what makes you die on schedule—only then can this world operate normally.

Read some Zen koans: they say there were great monks who saw the scene of their own death—not a natural death, but being killed by others—yet they were not afraid at all and went to die on schedule. They even told their disciples: do not seek revenge and blame the murderer. Everything lies within cause and effect; the causes you created in past lives brought this retribution. Dying counts as paying off one retribution; you should be glad.

Therefore, to see the future you must first let go of attachment to the physical body—you must reach the point of not fearing death!

This extinguishing of the cause of death also has stages:

First, extinguish the touch sensation of the body faculty—this is entering the Second Dhyana, which means you have extinguished half of the cause of death. You can see future events, but you still cannot see the moment of death.

Next, extinguish the warm and cold sensation of the body faculty—this is entering the Third Dhyana, which means you have extinguished all the causes of death of the physical body. Then you can see the moment when your physical body dies.

The physical body was never the true self in the first place—birth and death are all illusory!

After eliminating the cause of death of the physical body, you must go on to extinguish the cause of death of the Yang Spirit, which requires your practice to reach Arhats level. Then you can see five hundred lives before and after.

Why is there still a time limit?

Because Arhats still have the discrimination of sequence in delusions. Therefore, if you do not extinguish the cause of this time concept, the past lives you see will also have time limits. Only after becoming a Bodhisattva can you see past lives and the future without limitation.

By extinguishing sexual desire and entering the First Dhyana, you can see your own past live, including the scene of your birth in this current life. When I wrote the section on the human body, I talked about babies many times; that is because I saw the scene of my own birth. I recalled the physical sensations and psychological feelings from that time—this is also something that must be recalled! If someone claims to have attained enlightenment but cannot recall what it felt like at birth when asked, and that is nonsense.

Upon entering the Second Dhyana, you can see the future, and you can also see other people's past lives—limited to your relatives. You can see the past-life karmic ties between your relatives and you.

Upon entering the Third Dhyana, you can see the moment of your own death, and you can also see where you go after death. You can see more of the past lives and future of the people around you, and the range of people you can see becomes larger. All of them are centered on yourself—people who have, to greater or lesser degrees, past-life karmic ties with you.

Upon entering the Fourth Dhyana, you can see the past and future of anyone you have met. If you meet them, that means there are karmic ties in past lives—people with no connection to you at all cannot be met.

Here, seeing the past and future of yourself and your relatives involves no technique. However, when it comes to seeing people with whom you have a distant connection, those you have met only once, or even others without meeting them—by relying on factors such as their time of birth and places of residence—this does require certain skills. The details of these skills, though, will not be elaborated here.

Also, somewhere in this universe there is an archive, where the past-life records of all sentient beings in the Saha World are stored. If you are not yet a Bodhisattva but want to see any past life of another person, you have to go to the archive to look up the records. But there are conditions for entering; not every practitioner can go in—you must obtain permission. Moreover, for ordinary people to see the past lives of returned ones who have reached Nirvana is impossible; the administrators above will not allow you to see, in order to protect the returned ones.

Section 02: Supernormal Feet

Next, let us talk about the second supernatural powers—supernormal feet.

What is supernormal feet? It is the ability to leave behind the physical body, project consciousness out of the body, and travel freely through the universe. If you want to leave behind the physical body, you must let go of attachment to the body—again, it is about extinguishing attention. This follows the same stages as the power of knowing past and future lives.

In the Dhyana in the Desire Realm, the Yin spirit refers to the projection of one's consciousness out of the body by ordinary beings through their mortal Yin Qi. This form of out-of-body experience consumes an enormous amount of energy and has an extremely limited range of activity—initially, one cannot even step

outside the door, let alone fly. Frequently projecting the Yin spirit will surely deplete one's vital essence completely, to the point where one can no longer even enter into dhyana. Therefore, it is best not to engage in such practices during the early stages of sitting meditation.

When one eliminates the touch sensation of body faculty in the First Dhyana and enters the Second Dhyana, the Yang Spirits begin to take shape. At this stage, one can project the Yang Spirit out of the body, fly, and travel to farther places. However, one cannot travel through the Six Realms and is only able to fly within the human realm. Moreover, if the out-of-body state lasts too long, delusions will arise within oneself; once delusions emerge, the consciousness will immediately return to the physical body.

During the out-of-body period, because you have not extinguished the warm and cold sensation of body faculty, you still have sensation of temperature. Although compared to the physical body you can endure a much wider range of temperature changes, there are still limits. You can go to the north pole or the equator, but you cannot fly out of the atmosphere. If you fly out of the atmosphere in the daytime you will be burned to death by the sun; if you fly out of the atmosphere at night you will be freezed to death. Of course, as you fly upward you will feel the temperature getting higher or lower; once you cannot endure it you will return, so no one will be killed by temperature differences after leaving the body.

In the Second Dhyana, when you extinguish the warm and cold sensation of body faculty and enter the Third Dhyana, the Yang Spirit fully takes shape. After leaving the physical body, you can leap at the speed of light; as soon as a thought arises you can jump to the farthest place you can see. There will be no more temperature restrictions either: you can fly out of earth and travel to the sun. To reach the opposite side of the earth, you only need four or five jumps—and you can even travel through the Six Realms!

There are tricks to consciousness projection, flying, and light-speed leaping here. To put it simply: after you leave your body and see a wall, if you think it is a real wall, you will only be able to climb over it to get out. But if you change your mindset and regard the wall as a hallucination that never truly exists, you can pass right through it. The same logic applies to flying. First, if your consciousness conceives of flying as being like that of a bird, you will fly slowly and not travel very far. However, if you change your mindset and see yourself as a beam of light that can leap at the speed of light, you will essentially have mastered instantaneous movement.

These tricks are easy to say, but whether you can actually do them is a different matter entirely, so it does not really matter if I talk about them.

Section 03: Divine Ear

Next, let us talk about the third supernatural power—divine ear.

This can only possibly appear when you enter into the Second Dhyana—the realm of the ear faculty. In the First Heaven of the Second Dhyana, the universe is filled with gas, and one's Yang Spirit senses the vibrations of that gas and they become sound. The gas that fills this First Heaven of the Second Dhyana is not only in that heavenly realm; it pervades all worlds below. That is to say, from the First Heaven of the

Second Dhyana down to hell, this kind of gas exists—our human-world air is also condensed from this kind of gas.

Therefore, when you attain the realm of the ear faculty, you begin to enter the stage of hearing sounds through the Yang Spirit, no longer relying on the ears on your head. By using the Yang Spirit to sense the vibrations of the gas permeating the universe outside, you can hear all sounds from the first heaven of the Second Dhyana to the hell realms. Moreover, these sounds will not be muddled together—just as you can tune the frequency of a radio to listen to different stations, you can choose to hear sounds from any place you wish. This ability is called the divine ear! Mastering it requires certain tricks—which I won't elaborate on here!

Section 04: Divine eye, Mind-reading

Then comes the fourth—divine eye!

The divine eye can further be divided into Physical eye, Wisdom eye, Divine eyes, Dharma Eye, and Buddha eye—the Buddha eye belongs only to the Buddha, so we will not discuss it!

The principle of the divine eye is also simple: you only need to let go of the realm of the eye faculty, which is to enter the Third Dhyana. But there are also many exceptions. Some people have talent in this regard, their divine eyes may appear already in the First Dhyana. With divine eyes one can see the sentient beings of other realms who live together with us in our world—including various ghosts and spirits.

The Dharma Eye is superior to the divine eyes, and it can only appear when one enters the Third Dhyana. It not only enables one to see the sentient beings of other realms, but also allows one to judge their spiritual capacities by observing the colors of their Yang Spirit lights.

There are different interpretations of the wisdom eye! Some books state that the wisdom to comprehend sutras is called the wisdom eye. But in my personal opinion, the wisdom eye is none other than mind-reading—as the saying goes, to understand others is wisdom. Being able to interpret sutras is not a supernatural power at all; the true wisdom lies in being able to read the minds of others! Therefore, we will skip ahead and move on to the fifth one—mind-reading—right after the divine eye.

By observing other persons' Yang Spirit lights, you can judge their spiritual capacities and know how much sexual desire and greediness they have, but you still cannot read their current minds.

Then how to do mind-reading?

Then you must enter the Fourth Dhyana! Expand your own Yang Spirit into empty space, include other persons within the range of your Yang Spirit, and then you will be able to read all of other persons' minds.

Here's a metaphor for it: we are all fish. When I look at you, another fish, through my own fish's eyes, I cannot see how the tail behind you moves, nor can I feel your heartbeat. But if I turn into water and encompass you within myself, I will be able to sense every single move you make, including your heartbeat.

You might think: even if you let out your Yang Spirit and can sense my heartbeat, how can you know the minds in my head?

Actually, human thoughts are extremely crude and heavy; they are also delusions—crude delusions. Even Yang spirit substance is a form of delusion, yet an extremely subtle one. It is very simple and straightforward to sense the crude and heavy with the subtle.

And there is the last one: physical eye.

This seems simple, but its requirements are higher than all the supernatural powers mentioned earlier—you must use the Yang Spirit to control the physical body down to a very subtle level. The principle has already been explained earlier, so I will not repeat it here.

If the physical body is a puppet, then the Yang Spirit is the string pulling the puppet from behind, and a person's consciousness is the master holding the string. One could first use consciousness to control the Yang Spirit, and use emotion and attention to create gravitational points within the Yang Spirit.

People who enter the Fourth Dhyana have no emotion, and emotion itself is difficult to control, so only attention is the direct means by which the Yang Spirit can be controlled.

Use your attention to create one or more gravitational points within the Yang Spirit, and the blood in the physical body will follow accordingly, allowing you to control the physical body. Not only can you instantly enhance your eyesight and hearing, but there is an even more extraordinary ability: by making your attention "flicker," you can control the Yang spirit substance and cause it to vibrate. You can also instantly cease your attention, causing the movement of the Yang spirit substance to come infinitely close to a standstill. Although it is still in motion, its speed becomes extremely, extremely slow—and using this method, you can then control the atoms that make up the physical body.

When the movement of Yang spirit substance nears cessation, the atoms that make up the human body will also slow down their motion—thus the temperature of the local body suddenly drops. Conversely, when you use flickering attention to control Yang spirit substance to vibrate violently, the atoms that make up the human body will also vibrate violently, and the temperature of the local body suddenly rises.

The range of this temperature decrease and increase is beyond what ordinary people can imagine: it can drop low enough to freeze and rise high enough to burn. This is the principle behind the supernatural power of generating fire from the upper body and water from the lower body as described in the sutras!

Historically, many eminent monks manifested the self-combustion as they entered into Nirvana. A book records that a great monk had already instructed his disciples before he entered into Nirvana, and the disciples prepared a pile of firewood for him; but unfortunately, it rained heavily on the day he was to enter into Nirvana; the disciples urged the great monk to stay for more days and not leave so quickly; the great monk refused, climbed onto the pile of firewood himself, sat in full lotus posture; in the heavy rain, his body began to smoke; before long his body burned into ash, yet his kasaya did not burn.

People call this kind of flame that cannot be extinguished by water "Samadhi True Fire". Its principle is the vibration of Yang spirit substance—like being roasted by a microwave oven—every atom that makes

up the body vibrates violently, producing enormous thermal energy—of course it cannot be extinguished with water!

During the Buddha's lifetime, there were those who could wield the supernatural power of generating fire and water from their bodies and yet remain unharmed. However, no one has been able to exhibit such supernatural powers since the Buddha passed into Nirvana.

Here is another reason for this: it is easy to burn up one's own body, but how can one restore it? Those who have attained the Fourth Dhyana can burn up their bodies, yet they are unable to restore them. To achieve restoration, one must reach the Bodhisattva realm—the transformation of the Eight Consciousnesses into the Six Consciousnesses. Only when one attains the delusional realm of the bodhisattvas can one freely alter the material world formed by Attachment to the Six Consciousnesses, and exert unrestrained control over the physical body—burning and restoring it at the same time!

Among the disciples who practiced following the Buddha, many were returned Bodhisattvas, and they could use this supernatural power. After the Buddha's parinirvana, there were also returned Bodhisattvas, but generally they went back before they attain the Bodhisattvas' realm—and there was no need to display such supernatural powers.

The Buddha said that one's displaying supernatural powers is like a woman exposing her private parts for others to see; it will bring enormous trouble to oneself and also mislead sentient beings.

I will only explain the principles—to resolve everyone's doubts! As for techniques of use, it all depends on your own fate.

Blindly pursuing supernatural powers will only make you fall prey to inner demons. Just practice steadily and do not worry about any supernatural powers. If you do not seek them, supernatural powers will appear on their own—whatever should be there will be there!

If you ask me whether I have supernatural powers, I'll tell you I have no supernatural powers at all!

Section 05: Tantric Buddhism and Supernatural Powers

Regarding Tantric Buddhism initiations, mantras, and hand seals, I have to write an article. As I said before: I say it this way, you listen to it this way—do not get hung up on it.

When the Buddha was living in the world, he taught Dharma and spread the teaching, and for some disciples with special qualifications he transmitted esoteric methods that were not widely transmitted—namely mantras and hand seals. These esoteric methods are like cheat codes in a game, possessing inconceivable power: some can dispel illness and strengthen the body, some can command ghosts and spirits, and some can curse ordinary people to death. There is even a kind of disguise method: with the hand seals and reciting mantras, one will appear as a Buddha in the eyes of sentient beings in other worlds, making them revere one as if they had seen the true Buddha.

The Buddha transmitted these methods in order to subdue non-Buddhist ascetics, suppress external evil forces, and safeguard Correct Dharma. Since they are esoteric methods that are not widely transmitted,

they are certainly not open to lay Buddhists; they are transmitted only to Buddhist monks, who must also obtain the guru's certification—this certification process is called initiation. Initiation not only permits you to use these esoteric methods, it is also a method of horizontal transfer of merit—this already disturbs the law of cause and effect.

When the guru gives you initiation, he transmits to you the merit of his own practice, enabling you to eliminate many karmic obstacles in a short time and rapidly improve your practice realms; but the guru who provides such initiation must also bear corresponding karmic retribution, possibly falling ill for months or even years. Therefore, choosing disciples for the transmission of these esoteric methods is extremely strict! It depends not only on your moral quality, but also on your spiritual capacities and cultivation of practice. If one's moral quality is bad, it is like handing a sharp sword to a madman. If one's cultivation is insufficient, even if one learns it, one cannot bring forth the proper power; it is like a child holding a sharp sword—he cannot even lift it, so what use is it! Thus, early Tantric Buddhism was formed.

Later, some disciples who had learned only Theravāda Buddhism left the Buddha and went to India and Southeast Asia to spread Dharma—Tantric Buddhism was also taken there. However, it declined more and more because choosing disciples was not easy and cultivation was even more difficult! Instead, it was taken by some bad people with devious minds, slightly modified, and turned into the kinds of harmful sorcery popular in Southeast Asia today, such as "Tame Head" and "Insect Venomousness".

Another branch of Tantric Buddhism was transmitted into China by Mahayana disciples—this became the later "Tang Esoteric". For the same reasons, "Tang Esoteric" also declined. Some esoteric methods were taken by the Tiantai School; to this day there are still some monks of the Tiantai School who can preserve the practice of conducting initiations, but they do not transmit to lay Buddhists, and even when they do this, it is only a formality. Another portion was taken and modified by Taoism, turning into some Taoist magic.

The most prominent is Tibetan Tantric Buddhism!

In those days, Songtsen Gampo unified Tibet and established the powerful Tubo Empire. He married Princess Bhrikuti from Nepal, bringing in India's early Buddhism; and he also married Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty, bringing in the Chinese Buddhism from the Tang Dynasty. But at that time, the indigenous Bon religion of Tubo was quite powerful, and Songtsen Gampo could do nothing about them. It is said that evil beings abounded in Tibet, and its terrain was like a demoness. Songtsen Gampo built temples such as the Jokhang Temple and Ramoche Temple; later, more temples were built in succession, and from the perspective of geomancy they were all built on the acupoints and vital points of the demoness, thereby suppressing the demoness.

When Trisong Detsen ascended the throne and ruled, the Tubo Empire reached its peak, and its territory expanded greatly. Trisong Detsen then sent people to India to invite Guru Padmasambhava into Tibet; this Padmasambhava was a Tantric Buddhism lineage holder. Trisong Detsen's aim was to rely on Padmasambhava to vigorously build up Buddhism, thereby suppressing Bon religion. Because Bon also had considerable political influence, he hoped to free himself from its constraints, while outwardly claiming that he was inviting a great monk to suppress various evil beings in Tibet. As a result, Padmasambhava lived up to expectations: he moved many of Bon's deities into Buddhist temples, gave them new labels—calling

them this Vajra and that Dharma protector. Not only did this avoid offending Bon's grassroots believers, it also completed the localization of Buddhism, forming what is now Tibetan Tantric Buddhism.

Since it is Tantric Buddhism, the main Dharma practice still consists of mantras and hand seals, and it must be transmitted by the guru through initiation. But this way of transmitting Dharma has, up to now, become only a formality and has already lost the meaning it had when the Buddha transmitted esoteric methods. In the past when I went to Taiwan, there were even lamas who gave people initiation and transmitted a "Wealth Deity Mantra"—this is a bit unreliable! They even gave initiation to many people at the same time, while the guru was still so perfectly robust—just going through the motions.

In short, the mantras and hand seals of Tantric Buddhism, as transmitted nowadays, are just an ordinary Dharma practice, not as powerful as people imagine.

The purpose of Mahayana practice is to break the of birth-and-death, and transcend samsara. Choosing a mantra to protect yourself is enough! We are not Superman or Batman; subduing non-Buddhist ascetics and safeguarding Correct Dharma can be left to those great lamas.

Zen Buddhism has only one hand seal/mudra, namely the Samadhi Mudra, and does not teach other messy hand seals. Only under the Samadhi Mudra does the Qi flow become smooth, which is most helpful for practice. Therefore, if you want to recite mantras, just take the mantra and recite it; there is no need to care about any hand seals.

And for those friends who like supernatural powers: the number one taboo in Zen Buddhism is seeking supernatural powers! We do not talk about supernatural powers, and we do not discuss with outsiders the realms experienced in dhyana. What I discussed above about the dhyana in the Desire Realm was already touching upon the edge of the topic. If I were to delete the earlier part of "Three Qi Flow Returned to the Origin", and everyone looked only at the Dhyana in the Desire Realm and practiced accordingly, many people would get stuck and be stopped there.

When I speak of the stages of dhyana, I also judge progress by externally observable signs. I do not say what one will see or experience in dhyana; once that is spoken, it will not only make people intentionally pursue realms, it will also bring out supernatural powers.

If you seek supernatural powers, what will happen as a result? I will briefly tell you. Supernatural powers are nothing more than supernormal feet and divine eye.

Supernormal feet is Primordial Spirit's leaving body! If you want the Primordial Spirit to leave the body, you must open the Baihui Acupoint on the top of the head; if you want divine eye, you must open the Yintang acupoint between the eyebrows. When you place attention there, Qi also follows there; as time goes on, more and more Qi accumulates in the skull. Blood rushes upward; at first the eyes become bloodshot, then you feel dizzy and your head swells, and then you get splitting headaches; if you still do not stop, then the tiny blood vessels in the brain will burst—leading to either death or disability.

This is only the physiological aspect! Most people stop when they feel a headache; they will not stubbornly push on to death. But what is even more frightening than this is outer demon invasion! Your attachment to seeking supernatural powers will attract corresponding demons to possess you; they may

transform into the appearance of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas and teach you deviant theories—that is still the better case! Some demons attach directly to your consciousness, imperceptibly controlling you; they even lend you their supernatural powers, and you think you have truly cultivated supernatural powers; the demons also control you to show off supernatural powers everywhere, thereby cheating offerings to Dharma practitioners. In an instant you become a "master," without realizing you have become someone's plaything. For them, to kill you is as easy as turning over a hand; when they abandon you, your supernatural powers vanish at once, and you fall from "master" to fraud—look at what outcomes the various "masters" that have emerged in recent years have had.

This is only outer demon invasion; there is also the even more terrifying calling forth of Inner Demons! Look at the dreams we have: what we think about in the day, we dream about at night—these are all formed by our delusions, attachments, and habits, yet in dreams they are so real. If there were a drug that could make you have erotic dreams, with the object even being your dream lover, I reckon the sales of that drug would be even better than condoms. If you seek supernatural powers, the delusions, attachments, and habits within your consciousness will present extremely vivid illusions, making you unable to extricate yourself, thinking it is some good realm—thus the final outcome is imaginable.

In the past, when I practiced sitting meditation in the meditation hall, there was a fellow practitioner who practiced the Great Compassion Mantra. He had already reached the realm of the Dhyana in the Desire Realm, yet he still would not let go of the Great Compassion Mantra, feeling that reciting it was very good, and subconsciously he was also seeking some supernatural powers. He said that in deep meditation he felt as comfortable as being on clouds, and he recited the Great Compassion Mantra comfortably like that; then he saw Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva recited the Great Compassion Mantra together with him. Then he gave rise to happiness and began to fall into this illusion. Next, one Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva became two, two became three, three became four—more and more, until the whole world was full of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, reciting the Great Compassion Mantra with him. In the end, even when he was not meditating, he still felt that many people were desperately reciting the Great Compassion Mantra into his ears. When this episode struck, he would clutch his head and run wildly. In the end he stopped practicing sitting meditation and went down the mountain! I do not know whether he later got recovery. Intentionally seeking supernatural powers always ends like this!

The Buddha transmitted Dharma so that people can cut off afflictions, gain peace and happiness; break the birth-and-death, and transcend samsara. It is not to let us play with supernatural powers and indulge in them!

Chapter 8: Karmic Force

In this chapter, let's talk about karmic force.

Looking across the Eighty Thousand Tripitaka, there is relatively little that explicitly discusses karmic force, because ordinary beings can practice while still carrying karmic force, and can also be reborn to the Pure Land while still carrying karma. Therefore, there is no need to be overly preoccupied with the part about resolving karmic obstacles.

Section 01: The Arising of Karmic Force

We must first understand how karmic force arises!

If you engage in delusions by yourself, at most it is just a daydream—once you wake up, nothing remains. But from the moment emotion of longing arises, you begin to interact with other people—and that interaction is karma.

Your existence begins to affect other people's dreams, sometimes in good ways and sometimes in bad ways; other people's existence also affects you. And the more participants there are, the more complex the influences become, and the more solid this world becomes.

One person's dream is fragile, yet this world is so solid—why is that? Because there are simply too many people dreaming together! It is like one person holding up a tent with a pole: once the person removes the pole, the tent collapses. But when many people are each holding up the tent with poles—some leave and others come in—the tent is always being held up by many poles and never falls. This world is like that: extremely solid.

The influences between people are also very complex. You may become a very important character in someone else's dream; when you want to leave, they will not let you go. The only way is to eliminate all the traces you have left in their dreams, so that they no longer think of you. These traces usually refer to unwholesome karma. If you have harmed others, do not expect to leave without retribution. Even if it was unintentional, you may still be repaid unintentionally. Only after you endure retribution, will it count as having resolved karmic obstacles. Therefore, resolving karmic obstacles becomes a major topic within practice.

Section 02: Ordinary Beings' Resolving Karmic Obstacles

For ordinary beings, resolving karmic obstacles is a prerequisite for practice, but it is passive—you do not need to actively seek out creditors. As your practice advances, creditors in the ghost realms will come to find you on their own; among living people there are also creditors, and these people will also come to find

you. Earlier, I told everyone to recite the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra and dedicate merit, which is only an auxiliary method.

From the time you enter into the First Dhyana, karmic obstacles will appear in a very regular pattern. Each time you resolve one karma, your practice can advance by one level. Resolving karmic obstacles certainly requires suffering! Whether it is physical pain and illness, losing money, or emotional setbacks, once you endure it, things become a bit lighter.

Therefore, the practice of ordinary beings centers only on adhering to precepts and meditation. Cultivating merit is secondary! If you do not cultivate merit, and are truly deficient in merit, yet still really want to practice—then go all in and become a Buddhist monk.

Becoming a Buddhist monk, from another angle, is like taking a loan of meritss. If you have no meritss, then first "borrow" merits from sentient beings in order to practice; after you have practiced well, you come back to repay with both principal and interest—liberate all sentient beings who once made offerings to you, and that counts as paying it off. If you do not practice well and fail to enlighten, then you repay by working like an ox or a horse. It is like borrowing from a loan shark: if you cannot repay, they kill you and sell your organs.

Section 03: Arhats' Resolving Karmic Obstacles

Once you become an Arhat and attain liberation from the karmic cycle of life and death, resolving karmic obstacles becomes an active endeavor—it must proceed in sync with practice.

Arhats cultivate the Bodhisattva Vehicle of the Six Paramitas: offerings, adhering to precepts, forbearance, diligence, dhyana, and wisdom. Here, the first four are all forms of practice related to karma.

The first is to accumulate meritss through offerings. To practice, a person needs a great amount of time and energy, and must also be free of worries about food and clothing—this requires substantial meritss. People who rush about daily just to make a living cannot practice! You might think you can start practicing after retirement—that is a naive idea! When you retire, your Essence, Qi, and Spirit will already be exhausted; even if you practice diligently, progress will still be slow—nowhere near that of young practitioners. Therefore, you must first accumulate provisions for practice through offerings.

The second is to adhere to precepts. Adhering to precepts means no longer creating karma; not adhering to precepts is equivalent to continuing to create karma. If karma is not fully eliminated, then no matter how well you practice, you will still be dragged by your own karmic force into samsara.

The third is forbearance—this is a direct method of resolving karmic obstacles. When karmic obstacles manifest, do not resist, and do not hate your creditors; instead, you should be glad that they have come to collect the debt. If you endure it, it counts as having resolved a segment of karma.

The fourth is diligence. Not only must you be diligent in meditation practice, you must also be diligent in the offerings, adhering to precepts, and forbearance mentioned above.

The first four help to accumulate meritss and resolve karmic obstacles; the last two are practice. This is the main way Arhats practice when they reincarnate. Arhats can first design their own destiny and then reincarnate—building into that life the karma they want to resolve. Before reincarnation, they can also conduct simulated training within consciousness. If they feel the difficulty is too high, and cannot smoothly resolve karmic obstacles when karmic obstacles manifest. Then they lower the difficulty, first resolving what can be resolved. After their practice improves, they then resolve the more difficult ones.

Before Arhats are reincarnated, they still must continue to practice meditation, meditation for extinguishing the mind of discrimination. After an Arhat becomes a Bodhisattva, there is no meditation left to practice.

Section 04: Bodhisattvas' Resolve Karmic Obstacles

The main practice of Bodhisattvas is to resolve karmic obstacles!

Bodhisattvas' way of resolving karmic obstacles differs from that of ordinary beings and Arhats. For ordinary beings and Arhats, resolving karmic obstacles simply requires eliminating unwholesome karma, and as long as you endure retribution, it counts as having resolved karma. But Bodhisattvas must liberate sentient beings—beings with whom they have predestined dharma ties, both wholesome and unwholesome karmic connections.

After attaining Buddhahood, the Budda first liberated King Kaliraja who had previously dismembered him. Because from the perspective of no-discrimination, wholesome and unwholesome ties are the same: both are ties, both are traces left in other people's dreams.

Some people say sentient beings are illusory; then try killing someone and see what happens. Before the victim even gets reborn to seek revenge, the police will first arrest and execute you.

As stated in the Diamond Sutra, from the perspective of the Buddha's wisdom, all phenomena are neither real nor unreal. One must understand this clearly: it is within the Buddha's wisdom that this state of non-duality holds true. Yet for ordinary beings, everything is real: the world is real, sentient beings are real, and suffering is real.

In the original Sanskrit version of the Diamond sutra, an emphasizing phrase is inserted here: Within the Buddha's wisdom—in that state—all phenomena are neither real nor unreal. Similarly, the Sanskrit version Mahaparinirvana Sutra states that within nirvana—in that ultimate state—there are no sentient beings, no Four Great Elements, no Mount Sumeru, and so forth.

The statement that there are no sentient beings applies only to the state after one attains Buddha; for ordinary beings, sentient beings do exist. For ordinary people, sentient beings do exist. Bodhisattvas have no notion of sentient beings—but this means only that such a notion does not exist in Bodhisattvas' consciousness; it does not mean that sentient beings themselves are non-existent.

Since sentient beings truly exist, Bodhisattvas must genuinely engage in liberating sentient beings, resolving karmic obstacles, and erasing traces left in other sentient beings' dreams—only then can they

attain Buddha. For all these karmas exist within the Alaya Consciousness that become obstacles to attaining Buddhahood.

Then, Bodhisattvas have no mind of discrimination; yet when liberating sentient beings, they must adapt their methods of guidance to the specific capacities of each sentient being. Does this then count as having the mind of discrimination?

Once Bodhisattvas take rebirth, they will develop the mind of discrimination. The physical body is formed from attachment; and to have attachment, one must first possess the mind of discrimination. Bodhisattvas will first observe the traces of other sentient beings within Bodhisattvas' own karma, and then, based on this information, be reborn and teach the Dharma in a targeted manner.

Regarding how Bodhisattvas liberate sentient beings, I will reveal a glimpse into their realm—something you won't find in sutras.

First, there are primarily two ways to liberate sentient beings. The first involves direct manifestation of supernatural powers while in the Bodhisattva Grounds. This approach knows no limitations—the manifestation can be made visible to all. Within the realm formed by the six consciousnesses, manifestations can be achieved by altering the external four great elements, enabling many people to witness simultaneously. Alternatively, within an individual's brain, the optic nerve and auditory nerves can be stimulated to allow specific individuals to perceive the manifestation.

However, this method of manifestation has limitations: it works only for specific people and cannot be used for the universal promotion of Dharma. If Bodhisattvas appeared in the sky every day, people would not practice normally.

When people see phenomena they cannot understand, their first reaction is fear; this fear spreads like an infectious disease and can plunge an entire society into panic.

In the early days of Dharma promotion, I once traveled with Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva to a planet to promote the Dharma. That place was still a primitive society, before promoting the Dharma we first made arrangements. Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva had also just set out, and was extremely impatient—manifesting numerous UFOs for the primitive people, hoping to awaken them to the vastness of the cosmos, the existence of realms beyond their own, and the presence of other sentient beings. Instead, the appearance of UFOs plunged the natives into perpetual panic—paralyzing their ability to maintain normal productive activities and daily routines. Consequently, the promotion was canceled before it even began, drawing stern admonishment from Amitabha Buddha.

Here is a key point: Bodhisattvas have supernatural powers, and can perceive the past and the future; but once they intervene in another person's karma, it is unknown what consequences will follow.

In Christianity, God is proclaimed as omnipotent—an all-knowing, all-good, all-powerful deity, knowing everything, absolutely good, able to do anything—yet in fact God does not have such great ability! In contrast, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Buddhism have only all-knowing and all-good but no omnipotence. The Buddha taught of three limitations: immutable karma cannot be changed, those without predestined Dharma ties cannot be liberated, and unbelievers cannot be liberated.

In the matter of liberating sentient beings, although Bodhisattvas can perceive other people's karma as well as the past and future, once they intervene in another person's karma, it becomes unknown how that person will respond. For example, a Bodhisattva observes that someone harboring intense anger and thus judges that if someone hits him, he will immediately strike back; yet when someone truly hits him, he actually endures it—this situation is entirely possible. Therefore, when Bodhisattvas intervene in another person's karma to guide them, how the person responds can only be judged by experience.

The more extensive one's experience in Dharma promotion, the greater the accuracy attained. Bodhisattvas at the Ground of Equal Enlightenment have accumulated extremely rich experience in promoting the Dharma, therefore their judgment accuracy reaches 99.99%, yet failures can still occur.

The second way is to enter the cycle of birth and death while still carrying karmic force!

To resolve karmic obstacles, one must undergo rebirth while carrying karmic force, using the physical body of ordinary beings to practice and to promote Dharma. In this way, not only can one effectively resolve karmic obstacles, but also facilitates the liberation of sentient beings. I am an ordinary being, so are you—I'm simply a few steps further along in practice. I am using this physical body to practice like you, and then tell you my experience, you will not doubt it, because our bodies are the same.

The greatest danger of rebirth while carrying karmic force is "entering the womb and immediately losing awareness"! At birth there is no memory of past lives; until one recovers memory through practice, this period is extremely dangerous—one moment of negligence may lead to creating new karma. Some karma cannot be easily eliminated; then it may be impossible to return—cases of losing more than one gain do exist! Moreover, upon rebirth, supernatural powers and other abilities become obstructed by karmic force, preventing their full manifestation. When manifesting as Bodhisattvas, such obstructions are absent: supernatural powers can be used freely, eloquence is unobstructed, and teaching Dharma is very at ease. But rebirth while carrying karma does not work like that.

At this time, Bodhisattvas excel at activities they frequently performed in past lives—professions they engaged in for many lives before enlightenment. In this way, Bodhisattvas also have professions. They cannot do everything; they must do what they are best at.

Section 05: The Professions of Bodhisattvas

Among the professions of Bodhisattvas, Zen ranks first—People in this profession all practiced as non-Buddhist ascetics before encountering Dharma. When Bodhisattvas of the Zen profession undergo rebirth, their foremost skills are best at is expounding about Zen and wielding supernatural powers. And the most important thing in promoting Dharma is Zen, ultimate liberation from samsara still hinges upon it.

In the Pure Land, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin) is the leading figure of the Zen profession! Among the 1,255 disciples of Sakyamuni Buddha, Mahakassapa and Maudgalyayana belonged to the Zen profession. Kasyapa promoted Dharma and became the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism, while Maudgalyayana was foremost in supernatural powers.

Ranked second among these professions is Dharma teaching. Those who engage in this profession were all intellectuals before encountering Dharma. Even after their exposure to the Dharma, they spend a long period studying the sutras and mastering the Tripitaka—the Sutras, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma—thus they are essentially from the background of a bookworm. To promote the Dharma, both Zen and Dharma teaching must advance together! Zen alone will not suffice, nor will Dharma teaching alone. That is why this profession ranks second.

In the Pure Land, Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva is foremost in expounding Dharma, and is the leading figure of the teaching profession. Before becoming a Buddhist monk and practicing, he was an intellectual who taught classes; in many lives he also underwent rebirth as nobility and served as a civil official.

So, for promoting Dharma, are these two professions enough? Not sufficient! The third essential role is the human king.

The promotion of Dharma requires government support and a stable social environment. Therefore, Bodhisattvas undergo rebirth as human kings to unify the country and stabilize society. Bodhisattvas in this profession all come from noble backgrounds having served through multiple rebirths as emperors, chancellors, and military commanders. Their strategic acumen and statecraft surpass mortal comprehension—employing ruthless means to achieve sacred ends, their methods may appear mercilessly severe.

Looking at the emperors of successive dynasties, among accomplished emperors it is not rare for them to kill their relatives. King Ashoka, who unified India and spread Dharma, was a Bodhisattva rebirth. Chinese history records several accomplished emperors who were Bodhisattva rebirths. Emperors of Bodhisattva rebirth share one characteristic: diminished sexual desire and restrained marital expansions. If an ordinary being becomes emperor, he would have “three palaces, six courts and three thousand beauties”.

The fourth essential profession is merchant. Promoting Dharma requires a large amount of funds. Without the sponsorship of affluent benefactors, it is also very difficult, so merchants who can make money are also a major profession. For example, Lay Buddhists Vimalakirti and Pang were Bodhisattvas of the merchant profession.

The four major professions—Zen, Dharma teaching, human kings, and merchants—are important professions that are necessary for promoting Dharma! Besides these, whatever professions exist in our human world, Bodhisattvas have those professions too—except for professions like butchers, which are not considered proper professions! Every legitimate profession you can see in the human world has an equivalent in the Bodhisattvas realm. Bhaisajyarāja Bodhisattva is doctor, Meghaśrī Bodhisattva is musician; there are also architects, painters, and chefs—whatever professions you can think of, they exist! Bodhisattvas promote Dharma through professions—whether they become a Buddhist monk or remain a lay Buddhist—by doing what they are best at.

Section 06: The Partner System of Bodhisattvas

Secondly, a crucial safeguard exists to prevent regression. Once Bodhisattvas undergo rebirth, they lose their memory, and they cultivate their practice until they retrieve those memories. How do they get through this period? This is where the partner system comes in: all enlightened Bodhisattvas work in pairs. The relationship between the two cannot be compared to human spouses or twins: it is a mutual attraction deep within consciousness, like magnets—an absolute trust and tacit understanding. Prior to enlightenment, even before encountering Dharma and practicing, they have already formed deep predestined Dharma ties.

When one Bodhisattva undergoes rebirth into samsara, the other Bodhisattva does not undergo rebirth, and provides guidance on the Bodhisattva ground. The Bodhisattva who has undergone rebirth has no memory when he comes to this world, yet there is a consciousness that often comes in and tells him that many people in this world love him, and among them the one who loves him most is still himself. Because of the attraction and trust in the subconscious, the reborn Bodhisattva will not doubt this guiding consciousness. From the early stage of eliminating karma to later practice, this partner guides the entire process—how to choose when karmic obstacles appear, at what stage of practice to recite what mantra, and what Dharma practice method to adopt when practicing sitting meditation. Therefore, the reborn Bodhisattva will not take any detours in practice, until memory is recovered—completely a straight-line expressway. Once memory is recovered, he will establish contact with the organization.

Dharma promotion is never conducted haphazardly by individuals, it is carried out by a team in a planned and organized manner. After memory is recovered, the highest leader in the team assigns missions, telling you where to go and which sentient beings to liberate. The sentient beings liberated by this person are then blessed by the partner and the team's leaders.

Therefore, when everyone practices by reading my articles, you are blessed by my partner and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin). They have not undergone rebirth; they bestow empowerment directly from the Bodhisattva ground, thus their empowerment transcend temporal constraints. Were I to do so, I would still have to enter into dhyana! The method of empowerment is also absolutely accurate, arranged according to your practice needs—because they perceive more directly than me, who underwent rebirth with a physical body. I write these articles because Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin) told me to do so.

When this person dies after completing a lifetime's Dharma promotion mission, the karmic partner then undergoes rebirth, receiving continuous guidance from his partner in turn. In this way, it is ensured that Bodhisattvas who have undergone rebirth can practice smoothly and complete their missions.

In the Pure Land, if we rank seats, then No. 1 Avalokitesvara (Guanyin) and No. 2 Mahasthamaprapta are a pair, No. 3 and No. 4 are a pair, No. 5 and No. 6 are a pair, and so on.

In these Dharma-spreading activities in the human world, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin) underwent rebirth as Bodhidharma and brought Zen into China; at that time, Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva provided guidance behind the scenes. Next, Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva underwent rebirth as Xuanzang and brought Buddhist teaching into China; Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin) provided guidance behind

the scenes. We all use this method to take turns undergoing rebirth and carrying out Dharma promotion activities!

Under this partner system, occasionally cases of Bodhisattvas falling into degeneration may also occur. This happens because, in the process of eliminating karma and promoting Dharma, they make vows to do something else, or when karmic obstacles appear they do not listen to their partner and act recklessly. This is when the divine rescue team intervenes! The rescue team is entirely composed of Bodhisattvas of the Bodhisattva Ground of Equal Enlightenment; they are all great Bodhisattvas who are “one lifetime away” from Buddhahood, and their experience in promoting Dharma is unsurpassed. Such people undergo rebirth into samsara and approach from the perspective of karmic retribution, helping them eliminate karma or fulfill their aspirations, and then bring them out of samsara.

When all karmas are eliminated—when all traces left in others’ karma are eliminated completely—then Bodhisattvas attain Buddhas!

Therefore, prioritize rebirth in the Pure Land before considering other things! Because we have a complete system: from practice guidance to eliminating karma, to remedial methods in case of degeneration, all of it is handled by experienced professionals.

Practicing by oneself will inevitably lead you to hell! Even Bodhisattvas can possibly degenerate, let alone ordinary people who haven’t achieved liberation from samsara?

Alright, that’s all for now. I'm heading back this weekend!

This is the last article. Finally, I have done some promotion for my Pure Land. After I go back, I will see how things are! Everyone, do not wait anymore—do whatever you should do; just practice well.

Wish all of you good luck!